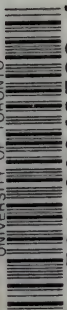


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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THE
KING OF THE JEWS.

A POEM.



B
GEORGE S. HITCHCOCK.

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Centr's presentation inscription

Mr F. E. Kappey,

with kindest regards from

Geo. S. Hitchcock.

22nd, September, 1898.

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

—A POEM BY—

GEORGE STEWART HITCHCOCK.

*Though this scroll describe triumphant evil,
Yet the labour will not be in vain
If it spur some spirit to retrieval
Of its treasure in despite of pain.
Arms are strong to guard and strike with vigour
When the heart suspires with sympathy ;
None the less this frail and lonely figure
Tells of mightier means to victory.
True, a blow dismays the tyrant-coward
And protects the weak from further ill,
But the strength to suffer is endowered
With a life no tyranny can still.*

Chatham :

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1898.

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THE WELCOME BY SORROW.

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THE INSCRIPTION OF THE POEM. TO POETRY.

DIM was the star when first it rose to bless
Night with a dream of purest happiness,
'Trembling through tears and mists of wintry sighs,
But seemed a sun when mirrored in thine eyes ;
And there I gazed until, immersed in thee,
My spirit found new founts of deity.

Success is grief, for mine the grim success
Of illustrating human feebleness
By this my tribute to the avatar
Of one small planet of a little star
Lost in the suns which form the Milky Way
And roll around the orb of greater day.

Though out of tune the lark and nightingale
Who sing within this tomb of shard and shale
Where rose and lily, wrought by artifice,
Shroud Grief in cerements of pulseless bliss,
Bear with my rhymes until my soul has wrought
A song divine in vigour, charm and thought.

Chatham,
25th January, 1898,

THE GREETING TO SORROW.

LET me, unknown as the gift which I bring to thee,
Rude as its riot of rhythms and rhymes,
Yet to thy throne ever lift, as I sing to thee,
Songs of atonement for earlier times.

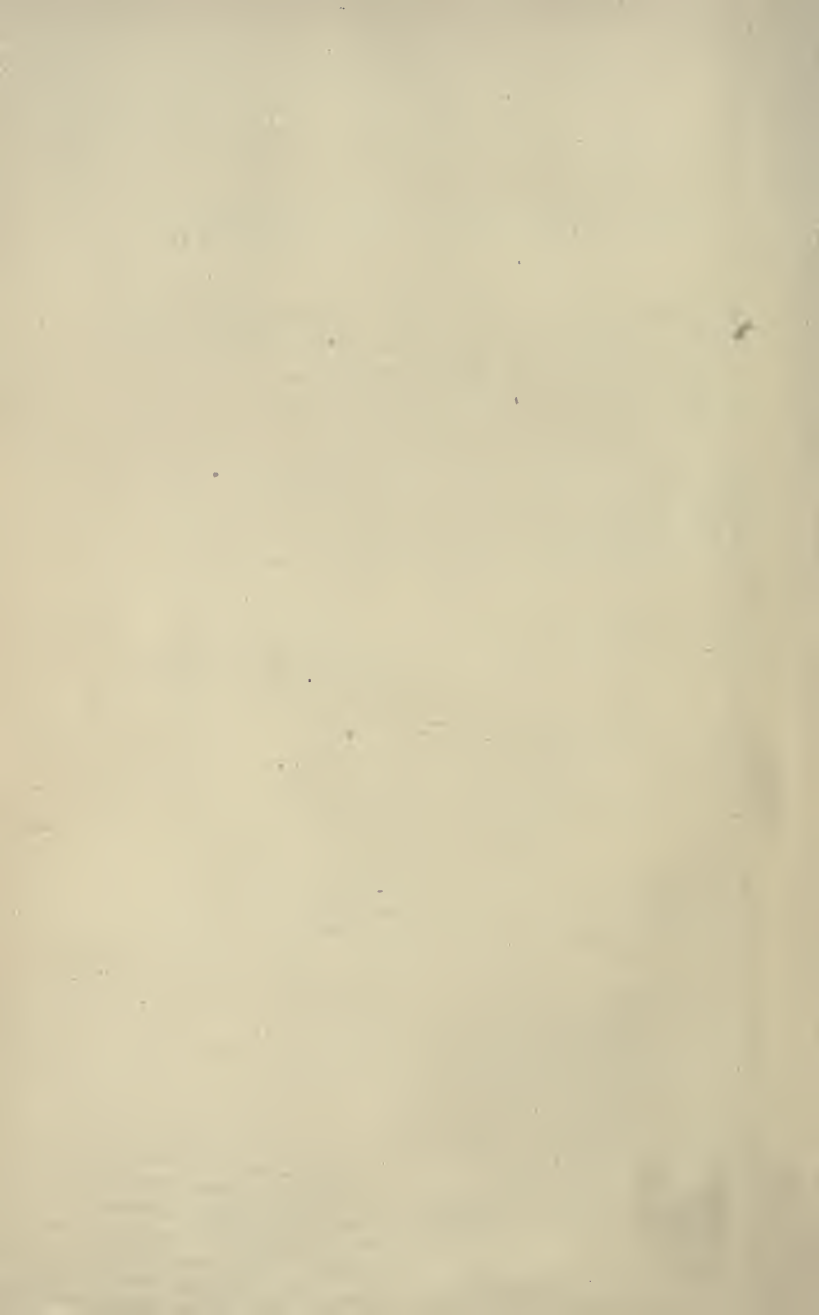
When thou didst palsy my mind and emaciate
Body and spirit, I shrank from thy hold ;
Since thou wert only a terror to satiate
Blossoming manhood with famine and cold.

Faithlessness fettered and phantoms enfolded me,
Babes which thy shadow had borne to Despair ;
These are the means with the which thou hast moulded me,
Branding my brow with the bruises of Care.

Mortals behold thee as gloomy and sinister ;
Yet I will trust thee, and come with belief
That I may find thee an angel and minister
Nursing our souls with the virtue of grief.

Pity and pardon the altar I raise to thee ;
All of my hopes went to furnish its fires ;
Even the incense ascending in haze to thee
Came of a life's disappointed desires.

Tarry a moment, nor deem me importunate ;
Linger a little and look in mine eyes
While I proclaim thee as fairest and fortunate,
Vision of God in a devil's disguise.



SCENE I.—A Fore-thought.

THE VALLEY OF TEARS.

(WHILE the winds, as they whisper, are hushing
The care-wakened cries
Of all creatures, the Morning is blushing
In fairest surprise
Where the dawn of the sunlight is flushing
The grey of the skies.

Yet the glen is in gloom, for its gladness
Has tasted the tears
Of the men, who are doomed to the madness
Of hoping through fears
And sustain in their sorrow and sadness
The yoke of the years.

But above, where the greensward is growing
Distinct to the sight,
Stands a woman, resplendent and glowing
As Angel of Light ;
And a greybeard, enshrouded, is shewing
As Angel of Night.)

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Ages past beheld my sway :
Ages yet shall bow to me,
Long as Night can hold at bay
Light and Life and Liberty.

THE HUMAN CHORUS.

We, in darkness, deep and drear,
 Fettered, breathing only sighs,
 All in vain our altars rear
 To the unregarding skies.

What avails a mortal's birth ?
 All for naught his toiling life ;
 Seeing darkness fills the earth,
 And the world is torn with strife.

All we have we offer thee, [*To the Angel of Night.*
 Victims slain with sacred rite :
 Hear but once our litany ;
 In thy pity grant us light.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

See, in the times of the past,
 Life, in the slime of its youth,
 Climbing and gaining at last
 Glimpses of beauty and truth.

There is the pathway of God -
 Out of the lifeless inane,
 Path which the Spirit has trod,
 Mantled in passion and pain.

Now shall the singers and seers
 Breathe as the Spirit impels,
 Weaving of terrors and tears
 Braids for the brows where he dwells.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Where the stars in their stations resemble
 The gems in a lyre,
 There's a sparkle of raylets which tremble
 In semblance of fire.

'Tis a crown, which is glowing and seeming
 As mystic as morn,
 But as pallid as palsy and gleaming
 With spikelets of thorn.

So the wreath, which is twined for the master
 Of music or verse,
 Is a splendour but binding the faster
 His brows with a curse.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

Deep in the soul, where no thinking or feeling
 Ever proclaims the defeat of the will,
 Nature is living and moving, revealing
 Realms where no evil is able to kill,
 Where, in the silence, her faith is appealing
 Mutely for freedom her life to fulfil.

God, who is wrapt in the shews of creation,
 Answers the wish of the thought-mantled soul,
 Hushes to peace all its wild consternation,
 Points to himself as its fulness and goal,
 Leading it out of its sad isolation
 Into the life and the joy of the whole.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Speak not to me of a Spirit transcending
 Aught that our senses can handle and see,
 Glassed by the mirror, where mortals contending,
 Fitfully striving, are feigning to be.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

Ages and ages have passed since began
 Sternest of struggles with life-slaying wrong ;
 Now that the ages have issued in man,
 Kingdoms of light are triumphant with song.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

See how manhood trembles at my frown ;
 And his the power to shake my throne !
 Crowned he is, in truth, and what the crown ?
 He knows the meaning of his groan.

Other creatures droop, and pass away,
 And never know how sad their state :
 He, endowed with reason's ruthless ray,
 Must watch the working of his fate.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

When piteous pain and plaint depress,
 And anguish shakes the feeble frame,
 Then reason, think you, must distress,
 Displaying darkness by its flame.

But mind can, like a god, create
 From all the good that life can give
 Of rapture, pure and passionate,
 A world of light where love may live.

Now, angel-brother, see the day
 Approach at last, when grief-born dreams
 Create the light that ends thy sway
 And conquers darkness with its beams.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Let the day of man begin.
 I will weave the web of sin
 All around him and within.
 Error reigns within his heart ;
 Madness flames about his brain ;
 And the powers of life depart
 In an agony of pain.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

While I am leading him
 Upward, and speeding him
 On to defiance,
 'Thou art enslaving him,
 Blinding, depraving him,
 Urging compliance.

Yet does the world-soul,
 Planet-like whirled, roll
 On to perfection :
 All of its movements,
 Failures, improvements,
 Have this direction.

See how the starry ways
 Seem like a starry maze,
 Lacking a single aim ;

Yet do those suns sublime
 Ever ascend, and climb
 Nearer the central flame.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Look not to Nature for thoughts which will cheer
 Hearts that are withered and hopes that decay ;
 Blindly she struggles in hunger and fear,
 Starved in the past and thought-angered to-day.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

To-day—the fruit of countless ages waging
 A war in which all pains and deaths were rife,
 Which knew no dream of coming good assuaging
 The pangs of fierce and universal strife—
 Is prophet of another day, presaging
 The grander scenes of yet a grander life.

Then nobler powers in mortal minds shall waken,
 And rend the veil which wraps the World and Man,
 And, true to truth, by faithless fears unshaken,
 Shall reach at length a knowledge of the plan
 Whose aim inspired the pains which God has taken
 In moulding life since Time and Space began.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Poor dwellers on this dying globe
 Which rolls along its changeless course !
 Why should they feign a splendid robe
 To clothe the play of fate and force ?

What can a mesh of quivering nerves
 Discover in the shews of sense ?
 And fancy's fleeting smile but serves
 To mock the man with vain pretence.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

The mind of man can pierce the pall of sense.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

To view his end, and tremble in suspense.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

Hercules stands in the skies,
 Goal for the race of the sun;
 Hercules, mighty and wise,
 Shines in the splendour he won.
 Manhood, immortal, a star,
 Glows on the bosom of years,
 Gleams in the distance afar,
 Crowned with its toil and its tears.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Poor planet, rent with rage and racked with pain,
 Ere men attain that goal thy life shall wane,
 And I shall chant this dirge to bless thy bane.
 Dead, dead, and growing cold as yonder moon
 Which told thy fate, when thou wast at thy noon,
 Nor dreamed that death could still thy strife so soon.
 Not thus thy life began on that great morn
 When clouds of fire condensed and thou wast born,
 For now the sun has shrunk from thee in scorn.
 No breezes breathe a fragrance o'er thy lands;
 Nor ocean seethes and rears around thy strands;
 No dawn or sunset fires the vapour-brands.
 What tongue could tell the tale of all thy years,
 Or weave in words its web of hopes and fears,
 And loves and hates, and joys and silent tears?
 Thou grave of lifeless forms which throbbed in light!
 Become a moon to breathe a baleful blight;
 And warn the dawning worlds of coming night.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

Earth may grow cold, and be a graveyard whirled
 In sleep and silence through the smiling skies;
 The visioned beauty of a poet's world
 Is born in every breast and never dies.
 Fair is the dream which Death and deathless Truth
 Have vested in a robe of sparkling tears,
 Charming as Hope, and generous as Youth
 Inspired by noblest deeds of vanished years.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Come, Death, in ghostly gloom resume thy reign ;
 For all created things are doomed to wane,
 And mortal forms enfold the poet's thought,
 The painter's dream and murmured music fraught
 With mysteries. Yea, all of foul or fair
 Shall reach thy realm through failure and despair.
 Thine was the world ere life began to be,
 When all from painful consciousness were free.
 Again the night of nothingness is nigh ;
 And life which vexed thy sleep with dreams shall die ;
 For thine the kingdom of eternity.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

Come, Death, for laughing life shall break thy chain,
 And spurn thy grasp to live in light again.
 In pity come, for thou hast ever brought
 The nobler life which moody mortals sought
 In lonely gloom or in ambition's glare,
 Where live alone the fumes of fear and care.
 Come, Death of Selfishness, appear to me
 In lightnings of heroic ecstasy,
 With softened splendours flashing from thine eye,
 Like those which speak of dawn in sunset sky,
 Or those which crown a mother's memory.

THE HUMAN CHORUS.

The madness playing round a mortal's brain
 Illumines Hope who vaunts herself Death's bane,
 Robing her trembling limbs in radiance caught
 From visions which the mocking rainbow wrought.
 Her features, false as life, are wont to wear
 A look composed of peace and lowly prayer.
 But when pursued, she turns as if to flee,
 With many a backward glance of grinning glee ;
 And to our wail of woe and fainting sigh
 Answers with mirth, as she floats slowly by
 On poet-painted mists of melody.

THE ANGEL OF NIGHT.

Self-tortured minds, what need have ye to feign
 The form of Hope and dreams of her disdain ?

Death is the good, and as a victor fought
 With Life to win a truce for men distraught.
 Death is the true, and be it mine to share
 The wreath of ice which binds her ashen hair
 Death is the beautiful, the poetry
 Of calm and everlasting harmony.

Throned in her placid loneliness on high,
 She feels no pain, hears no discordant cry ;
 And starless night shall form her canopy.

THE ANGEL OF LIGHT.

O Love, divinest Love, thy life has lain
 Too long enlapped in poverty and pain ;
 For Death and Night in concert crush to naught
 The world thy pangs and sacrifices bought.
 Thine are the consecrated lips which bear
 The voice of God ; and loving words prepare
 The earth to don thy gentle panoply.
 But where Death holds her court usurpingly,
 Thy royal strength shall rise at last to vie
 With her, and rend the foe who dares defy
 The might of Love's eternal monarchy.

THE HUMAN CHORUS.

The powers, which move the world, in sorrow met
 To weave a royal wreath for deathless Death.
 They seized the falling stars of night, and set
 Their splendours in a woman's dying breath,
 And draped the diadem in mist as vague
 As maiden's dream ere scathed by passion's plague.
 The moody Night designed her ghostly veils
 Of frozen dews and clouds of sombre tone,
 Which trembled like the songs of nightingales,
 And floated o'er the fire-flies in her zone ;
 While baneful breezes breathed a blast and blight
 To bless the gift designed by moody Night.
 But Love, sweet Love, who lingered last, bestowed
 On Death the coronation robe of hope,
 Which bore for ornaments a poet's ode
 And endless chains of pulsing hearts that grope
 In darkest ways, pursuing and pursued,
 While Life performs her little interlude.

SCENE 2.—The Hill above Nazareth.

(Lo ! the sun with his dying splendours
Empurples the sky and sea,
And to Carmel alone surrenders
His grandeur and majesty.
'Mid the shadows of eve appearing,
Stands Jesus upon the crown
Of the hill which is darkly rearing
Its front o'er his native town.
And Jesus is standing, and gazes
Where Nazareth sleeping lies,
But turns as he prays and upraises
His brow to the sunset skies).

JESUS.

Moulder of sunlight and stars,
Father of flowers of the field,
Moving where mist never mars
Virtue, unveiled and revealed.
Hear me, and bend from thy throne ;
Hear, for I call unto thee ;
Hear, for my cry is a groan,
Sad as the moan of the sea.
Utter one word by my voice ;
Kindle my heart with thy fire :
God, in thy soul to rejoice !
Once in thy breath to respire !

THE CHILDREN OF NAZARETH.

(Entering with JOHN, and singing.)

Under our feet
The flow'rets are springing ;
Voices, as sweet
As Heaven, are singing.

Passes the daylight :
 The flow'rets are sleeping ;
 Songs by the grey light
 Are changed into weeping.

Soon will the light
 Awake by its splendour
 Flowers, the most bright,
 And songs, the most tender.


JOHN, *a young man.*

Look, his fierce and livid frown
 Darkens into mystery,
 Like the vapours in his crown.

JESUS.

Speak, and tell me what you see.

JOHN, *pointing to the sun.*



There a dragon clothed in clouds
 Fills a flagon full of flame,
 While the cirrus serfs in crowds
 Bow and tremble at his name.

Yonder lie his labyrinths
 Formed of foam and frosted flowers,
 Where a hail of hyacinths
 Falls in slow and listless showers.

And the Moon, a mystic maid,
 Looks and leans in lovely light
 O'er a beryl balustrade
 Towards her saviour, starry Night.

'Neath a roof of coral boughs,
 Gemmed with spinel stalactites,
 Breathing beauties bind her brows,
 Born of pearls and chrysolites.

Deep the dragon drinks the draught,
 For he feels his vigour fail ;
 Takes a sunbeam, aims the shaft
 At the moonlight, pale and frail.

Swifter than the voice of God,
Speeds the sunbeam in its flight,
Fierce as faith and fair as fraud,
Flying famished for the fight.

Now the noiseless Night is near,
Leaps to save her satellite,
Blights the beam in full career,
And asserts the reign of Night.

JESUS.

Guileless spirits, taught of God,
Know the songs of buds and birds ;
Find in cloud and flow'ry sod
Poems and incarnate words.

JOHN.

Jesus, darkness comes apace ;
Wilt thou not return with us ?

JESUS.

No ; I wait to watch and trace
Twilight's triumph tremulous.

JOHN.

Dost thou love the misty moon
And the dreams which drape the night ?

JESUS.

Yes ; but they shall wither soon
In the dawning of the light.

THE CHILDREN, *singing.*

Soon will the light
Awake by its splendour
Flowers, the most bright,
And songs, the most tender.

(*They go out with JOHN.*)

JESUS, *to Judas who enters.*

Peace to thee ; why dost thou wander away
From the town as the shadows of darkness impend ?
Stay at my house till the breaking of day,
And we'll tend thee and speed thee with love, as a friend.

JUDAS, *son of Simon the Assassin.*

No rest. No rest. The chains still bind
The people I have sworn to free ;
While wealth and royal favour blind
The Jew to loss of liberty.

No rest, until the people's might
Has hurled the tyrant from his seat,
Until the God of our delight
Has flung our foes beneath our feet.

JESUS.

Fear to utter rebel thought
Against the power which rules us still.
Thou hast known the evil wrought
On those who dared withstand its will.

JUDAS.

Ah, would'st thou betray me ? Then curses assail thee,
Nor ever the prayer of the righteous avail thee ;
But lost in the grave and unknown be thy story,
While ever the brave is enthroned in his glory.

JESUS.

Betray thee ? No ; the traitor's mind
Is born in rage or wild despair ;
And fated so it may but find
The scorn of age and childhood's stare.
But stay this night till morn arise
And day-dawn light adorn the skies.

JUDAS.

No rest for me ; 'tis the night of the nation.
The people are sleeping, regardless of fame.
No rest till, roused from their humiliation,
The people are weeping their loss and their shame.
(He goes out.)

JESUS.

Forth he goes, with the light on his brow
Of a spirit illumed and consumed
With the flame of a cause,
Such a cause as alone can endow
With the highest applause,
Self-applause of a spirit self-doomed.

JESUS, *to Mary, his mother, as she enters.*

How brilliant is the roseate veil God throws
 Upon the features of the failing day ;
 And oft I watch it thus, till fancy glows
 With dreams of worlds which never fade away.

Here, when my toil is ended, I can lie
 And quite forget my weariness, and dream
 Of God, whose love appears in earth and sky
 And lights the world with sunset's radiant beam.

For, like a father in his faithful care,
 He watches over me, and still I hear
 His voice in thrilling music, clear and rare,
 While love proclaims the death of feeble fear.

Perhaps, who knows ? and yet I hope, and dare
 To think that God will speak to men by me,
 That by my words and works he will prepare
 The souls of men to claim their liberty.

Of old he spoke to them by those who felt
 The throes of higher life within and bore
 His impress—those, in whom his wisdom dwelt
 And made them sons of God for evermore.

MARY.

Child of my maiden joy,
 My only care and dearest treasure,
 Thy hopes recall the youthful pleasure
 Felt in my baby boy.

Child of my maiden grief,
 I felt thy head in anguish throbbing :
 I heard thy voice in sorrow sobbing,
 Sorrow beyond relief.

JESUS.

Thus thy joy and sorrow alternating,
 Thou didst see my life as sad or pleasant,
 With the angels round my pathway waiting
 And the future pictured in the present,
 Dwelling now on life's loud song of gladness,
 Now upon its undertone of sadness.

MARY.

Simple joy and simple sorrow
 Mark alone the poor man's fate ;
 Like to-day will be to-morrow ;
 We must still endure and wait.

But the hands of dreams new-fashion
 This poor life composed of pains,
 And create a purer passion
 Than the fire in earthly veins.

JESUS.

The lowly life which laughed in light,
 Or darkened in the dreary day,
 Has still in silent sleep the sight
 Of God away.

As fields, like these, which foamed in fight,
 Or echoed to the laughing crowds,
 Or swooned beneath abysmal night
 And dismal clouds,

May know, in uneventful years,
 The passion of that patient Power
 Which smiles in light or rains in tears
 To feast a flower.

MARY.

In the golden grey of eve,
 When crimson clouds have gone,
 Ere the silver stars relieve
 The darkness creeping on,
 Sadness stills the soul to sleep
 In dreams of peace to be,
 Memories o'erwell and steep
 The mind in melody.

JESUS.

So sleeps the land, a star in sable set,
 Like pallid patience pillowed on regret.

MARY.

The land is now a desolation :
 All the woes the prophets uttered,
 All the curses foemen muttered,
 Are fallen now upon the nation.

JESUS.

There are realms the tyrant cannot enter :
 There's the kingdom of the soul,
 Where is found no fierce and foul tormentor
 When the powers of God control.

And of this are mortals ever dreaming,
 Burning with ecstatic glow ;
 Of all hopes which nerve their life-long scheming,
 This the noblest they can know.

Not ambition wakes their aspiration
 With such strength as this their dream :
 Little value earthly wealth or station,
 When compared with this, they deem.

Who shall point to men the true direction
 How to realise their plan,
 Kindle flames of love for God, affection
 And a fiery zeal for man ?

I shall go ; my spirit strongly urges,
 And my dreams with force impel :
 I shall go where human passion surges,
 Where the floods of action swell.

I shall go ; let joy, or pain, or sorrow
 Wait about the path I tread :
 Night may come, and gloom, but on the morrow
 Sunshine fills the world o'erhead.

MARY.

Jesus, hear thy mother's pleading ;
 Leave me not in loneliness :
 Life is cruel, never heeding
 Cries of pain or deep distress.

Fear has seized me, lest, when needing
All my sympathy and care,
Lest, when thou art wounded, bleeding,
Not one comforter be there.

JESUS.

When fearful heart would seek a reason
And a motive for delay,
Then valiant soul must count it treason
From the battlefield to stay.

O God, regard my salutation ;
Loved by thee, I fear not loss.

MARY.

Ah, so men stand in supplication :
So are fastened to a cross.

SCENE 3.—The Wilderness of Judæa.

(FAR from toil and tumult of crowded cities,
Two men stand where Jordan, the sacred river,
Pales with stars, those symbols of countless pities
Weak to deliver.

Draped with dreams, the darkened and lonely regions
Seem a camp of angels whose wings environ
Both the men with mightier power than legions
Armoured in iron.

At their feet before them a youth is lying,
Swathed in pensive pallor which stars are flinging
O'er the world, and pours his full heart of sighing
Into his singing.)

JOHN, *chanting as in a dream.*

Though the moonlight be misty and pallid,
It reveals the sad face of the sea
By whose lips, as we listen, a ballad
Is chanted in wave-tones for me ;
And the clouds take the forms of the faces
Which lightened in life in the strain
Of my music, though moodiness traces
Sad runes in their wrinkles of pain.

O'er the wilds of the waters a glimmer
Of gladness, more grievous than grief,
Is appearing, but death-like and dimmer
Than eyes which despair of relief ;
And the froth, that is born of the fretting
Of tides and the sleep of the land,
Is grown grey as the grass in begetting
A foam-wreath to circle the sand.

Roses pine in the weird light ; their petals
 Are wan as they wither and fall
 On the flint-stones, on thorn-bush and nettles ;
 And woodbine grows hateful as gall ;
 For the rhyme and the revel of measures
 Which leapt from my lips in the light
 Are bereft of my voice, and their pleasures
 Are numbed in the nursing of Night.

JUDAS.

Where is the flame which once fired to endurance ?
 Chilled is my heart at the core.
 Where is the hope which was sure as assurance ?
 Stilled, like my youth, evermore.

Lonely and living thus listless in langour
 And powerless for patience or pride,
 Lacking the fever of faith or of anger,
 I die, for my day-dreams have died.

JOSEPH, *a rich man.*

The high-strung soul, that strains its powers
 To reach a nobler life,
 Will know in solitary hours
 The gloom which follows strife.

Then weary thoughts depress the heart,
 And fever frets the brain ;
 Till all the manly aims depart,
 And dreary dreams remain.

JUDAS.

I have no dream to madden and restore me,
 No strength to strain in strife ;
 For I am doomed to give to her who bore me
 A wasted life.

JOSEPH.

Why would'st thou daunt thy soul with idle terror
 And falter in thy fears ?
 Look where there shine through mists of sin and error
 Thy mother's tears.

JUDAS.

My mother's tears still whisper through the years
 With power to calm my spirit, faint with fears,
 When memories of infancy, united
 With frenzied passions and ambitions blighted,
 Awake my truer self which still reveres
 My mother's tears.

And when I joined the ranks of pioneers
 Who fought too close with sin which scathes and sears,
 My heart of hearts, though hardened, never slighted
 My mother's tears.

Like one, bewildered and distraught, who steers
 O'er faithless seas or sails on wind-swept meres,
 I pass my life in storms and toils, affrighted ;
 But yet a light appears to me benighted,
 Which, kindled in her faded eyes, endears
 My mother's tears.

JOSEPH.

Weep for sins of youthful folly,
 Sloth and languor :
 Blush for moods of melancholy,
 Care and anger.

Leave the weeping and the blushing :
 Face the morrow,
 Lest the past prevail in crushing
 Life with sorrow.

JOHN.

Each of them whirls in an orbit of madness,
 And circles some dream which attracts to its blaze,
 Clad in a spirit of gladness or sadness
 As robed in its radiance or reft of its rays.

JOSEPH, *to Judas.*

Light is the laughter of the lark at noon,
 Rippling upon the tones of nightingales ;
 Yet sad as Memory the mournful tune
 Born in the bosom of a flower that pales,
 Although the sunlight bathe it from above,
 Forlorn and famished for the lack of love.

Rich are the rain-drops sparkling in the grass,
 For in their smiles all splendours seem to meet ;
 Though weighed with woe the weary winds that pass
 O'er golden flowers which bloom among the wheat,
 And moan that boon of beauty ne'er succeeds
 In warding off the fate of worthless weeds.

Good as the God of goodness are the eyes
 Where infant innocence is sentinel ;
 But lurid lightning lingers in the skies
 Of those who held with sin and leagued with hell,
 To whom the Past's impassioned quest bequeathes
 A tomb of Hope adorned with rotten wreaths.

Immortal mortal, must the mood of earth
 Be mingled of such elements as these,
 A chalice filled with mad, unmeasured mirth
 And pain of heart that nothing can appease ?
 Then thine be action's cup, whose vapour forms
 The cloud of strife and strides athwart the storms.

JOHN, *chanting*.

Magic music moulds of mirth
 Temple-dome and fairy shrine,
 Where the passion-songs of earth
 Rise around a Void divine.

Fairest faces fill the halls,
 Watching shapeless shadows spin
 Veils of light to blazon walls
 Twined of gold and hyaline.

On a crystal floor and plinth
 Waves each pillared gossamer,
 In whose web of hyacinth
 Dwells a sleepless chorister.

Clouds of snowy fancies curl
 O'er the beams of ruby rays ;
 And the roofs of sunlit pearl
 Quiver in the mists of praise.

JOSEPH.

We seek to brace the faith that faints,
 To cheer the mind which onward gropes,
 To voice the deep and dumb complaints
 Of broken hearts and blighted hopes.

We seek to sing the stronger strain
 Which wakes the manhood of the will,
 And fires its efforts to attain
 That fame which falsehood fails to kill.

We seek to plant the thought which dares
 To live a lonely life of tears
 In scorn and scathe, but buds and bears
 The noblest fruit of future years.

JOHN.

I would lie amid lilies and roses,
 Full-fed on what dreams have amassed;
 Or I'd watch, while the water that flows is
 Arrayed in a mist and cuirassed
 With the brilliance the ripples have glassed
 For the veiling of tears and distresses,
 When nature is gilded and brassed
 In the warmth of the summer's caresses.

I would sleep in the day-dream that dozes
 Afar from the turmoils which blast
 The slumbering peace that reposes
 In visions unveiling the vast
 And impalpable pure Protoplast,
 Where never annoyance suppresses
 The fancies of spirits held fast
 In the warmth of the summer's caresses.

For the blossom that poetry grows is
 More pallid than stars which contrast
 With the gold that the lotus discloses
 To streamlets o'ergrown and engrassed;
 And the spirit which hurries aghast
 From the struggle of worldlings confesses
 That the glories of strife are surpassed
 In the warmth of the summer's caresses.

O wind, when my mind would forecast
All that thou in futurity hast,

Reply with your whispers of yeses
That all will be well at the last
In the warmth of the summer's caresses.

JOSEPH.

In the mystic morn of Youth
Beauty wore the robe of Truth,
And each fancy seemed a gem
Sparkling in her diadem.

Where her vestal footsteps fell,
Earth grew fair with asphodel,
In whose whispers poets heard
God's supreme and final word.

Manhood tore her robe apart,
Drained the blood at Beauty's heart,
Swearing that her robe should be
Wrought of Strength and Liberty.

By her throne, on either hand,
Rage and Wrong, his vassals, stand,
Waving in the wind their flags
Formed of Beauty's robe in rags.

And to weave her royal dress
Misery and Sordidness
Bring their famished slaves to spin
Raiment rich with tears and sin.

Ere the light of day is fled,
Beauty lies among the dead ;
While, of metaphysic clouds,
Palsied Passion shapes her shrouds.

Now, in vain, we seek a trace
In the world of Beauty's grace ;
But, above her lifeless heart,
Age erects a tomb of Art.

Oft some faint and feeble Faith
Steals a glimpse of Beauty's wraith
In the night of gloom and ruth,
And her robes are rags of Truth.

JOHN, *chanting*.

In the sky beyond the West
 Twilight wrought the dead sun's vest,
 Weaving clouds of purple mist
 Into robes of amethyst.

Then the loving Seraphim
 Sang sweet Sorrow's saddest hymn,
 Till the echoes of the sphere
 Murmured o'er the dead sun's bier.

All night long the stars bewail
 Hush of song and loss of veil
 Which had soothed a world undone
 In the dying of the sun.

Day shall mould of golden mist
 Vestments for its eucharist,
 While the woods and rivulets
 Chant an anthem of regrets.

Song and robe shall wrap the Night
 Kneeling as an acolyte,
 When the Morning stands as priest
 On the mountains of the East.

JOSEPH.

When the dawn of the sunlight is breaking
 In twilight of falsehood and scorn,
 And a truth in its trouble is waking,
 We herald the morn.

Unappalled by the passion and pallor
 Of fury and fear which are born
 In the birth of all virtue and valour,
 We herald the morn.

Undeterred by the sceptre and sabre,
 And crowned with the spikelets of thorn
 Which are wreathed for the forehead of labour,
 We herald the morn.

JUDAS.

To us has come a message,
 Fiery but tremulous,
 Which bears a braver presage
 To us.

The hosts of ancient rebels
 Are ours, and ours the ghosts
 Of deeds whose memory trebles
 The hosts.

JOHN.

To war with the world you require
 The wealth of a State or a Throne ;
 And where are the men you'd inspire
 With strength that is strong as your own ?

JUDAS.

The reckless and men who have found
 The results of their labour destroyed,
 The slaves of the mill and the ground
 And the hosts of the starved unemployed,
 The victims of fraudulent schemes,
 And the youths who can never attain
 The prizes which gleam in the dreams
 Of a noble and vigorous brain.

JOHN.

They will not strive for common weal
 But common home and common purse ;
 And by your word you will appeal
 From curse unto a deeper curse.

JOSEPH.

In truth, some wild, fantastic hopes
 Are borne upon the storm of change,
 Like spectres mocking him who gropes
 In worlds where all is new and strange.

But Nature's tread is slow and sure,
 And tramples down the weeds of night,
 And suffers nothing to endure
 But that which springs from seeds of right.

JOHN.

Yes ; at the birth of it
 Visions are splendid :
 What is the worth of it
 When it is ended ?

JOSEPH.

The single stream is forced to seek the ocean ;
 And single stars must own the sway of all ;
 For self avails alone for self-devotion,
 And freedom's proudest crown is won as thrall.

But see, the selfishness of former ages,
 When earth was but a theatre of strife,
 Still clings to these, the later, nobler stages
 Of progress toward the goal of fuller life.

For still we offer human sacrifices,
 And worship self with heaps of human dead,
 Our sisters, slain by foul and loathsome vices,
 Our brothers, slain by toil and want of bread.

Yet even now my heart is rapt, beholding
 The glory of the future, juster time
 When Man becomes the faith of men, enfolding
 The castes and creeds of every race and clime.

Then thrones and empires find their consummation
 In one great State of undisputed sway ;
 And all the world becomes a single nation
 Which treads in unity its upward way.

JUDAS.

Service, Equality, Brotherhood, phrases
 And speeches that die in the day of their birth,
 Measure the might of the man who appraises
 In leisure and pleasure the sorrows of earth.

Nakedness, hunger and thirst are the real
 And menace us, keeping our bodies in thrall,
 Blighting the fancy which feigns an ideal
 Of Truth and of Hope and of Justice for all.

Truth has no charm where Necessity shivers
 In hovels apart from the glances of God,
 Dwelling in darkness by ice-covered rivers
 Of tears which no smile of the sun ever thawed.

Hope cannot lighten the life that is blasted,
 And has but created a shadowy throne
 Gilded with splendours, which Rage has contrasted
 With all of the sorrow the spirit has known.

Justice alone is our prayer and petition ;
 And Justice alone is the cry of the soul.
 Would you refuse it ? Then crime and sedition
 Shall stalk through the land and o'erpower all control.

JOSEPH.

There is a life new-born in death's dark hour
 And folded in the arms of dreamy Night,
 Like that which sleeps within the autumn flower
 And wakes in spring to bathe in streams of light.

And though to you our age may seem to wear
 The mantle of decay, it holds the seeds
 Of self-abandoned men whose bosoms bear
 The flowers of simple truth and noble deeds.

JUDAS.

The people still are prey of feud and faction ;
 The nation still a slave to selfishness ;
 The heirs of time are born in noble action
 And moulded by a youth of strife and stress.

And they, the destined chieftains who inherit
 A heart to feel and brain to plan success,
 Shall grow with swelling times and rule by merit
 Of arms to save and truthful lips to bless.

JOHN, THE BAPTIST, *entering.*

O Israël, what mighty voices
 Proclaim the advent of thy king ;
 For Heaven smiles, and Earth rejoices
 With all the transports of the Spring.

This year, the fields, untilled and idle,
Are with the world in deep accord,
And wait the meeting and the bridal
Of Israël and God the Lord.

The land, in robes of nature's weaving,
Is looking for Messiah's light
That comes, restoring and retrieving
The losses of the lengthened night.

And on the spirit of the nation
Descends the comfort Heaven gives
Through Heaven's ancient proclamation,
Behold the One Eternal lives.

The kingdom of our God is speeding
To harvest as the Lord revealed ;
And he himself directs the weeding
Of fire-doomed darnel from his field.

Make clear across the fenceless spaces
A pathway for Eternal Right ;
And level in the sterile places
A terrace for resistless Might.

JUDAS.

Then move the heart of God who gave
Reward to wrong. His wealth has sealed
The forehead of the soulless knave
Who sins in joining field to field.

THE BAPTIST.

Nay ; for Eternal God proclaims
By all our popular unrest
His scorn of low and selfish aims
And zealous love for those oppressed.

JOSEPH, *to Judas.*

Why should you rave at the riches around you,
And grumble and groan till the brave interfere ?
Why should you wail for the wealth which has bound you
And held you as captives for many a year ?
For your own weakness and folly have crowned you
With fear.

Have you no heart but for hate and suspicion ;
 No lips but for lisping of liberty's name ?
 Blind are your eyes to the worth of the vision
 The spirit of man is unfolding in flame :
 Aye ; and your flags are but rags of derision
 And shame.

JOHN.

They say that you are weak and feeble men
 Impelled to sudden speech by sudden thought,
 Like those who hold the poet's fiery pen
 And fashion frenzied nothing out of naught.

JUDAS.

They say ! They say, as they have ever said,
 And spread the solemn lie or mocking tale
 Which flames about the living and the dead
 Until their sunny glories fade and pale.

Who fears the slander wafted by a breath ;
 And who would therefore fling away his cause
 While Virtue can prevail o'er scorn and death
 To bless the brow which sought but her applause ?

JOSEPH, *to the Baptist.*

Help us, brother, yours as ours the battle,
 Yours as ours the worldling's snarls and sneers,
 Grief and labour, till the harsh death-rattle
 Crowns with rest the fret of fevered years.

Join us, brother, in our friendless season,
 While our eyes are scalded with their tears,
 While our faith in man is counted treason,
 While the people spurn their pioneers.

Brother, see the world of woe and sorrow
 And the many held in rich men's thrall ;
 Watch with us the dawning of the morrow
 Bright with health and happiness for all.

Ours are not mere selfish mean devices
 Planned to spread a creed or party-name :
 Ours the truth that grows by sacrifices ;
 Others' wealth accomplished by our shame.

Brother, comrade, heed the voice within you ;
 Do not league you with the stronger part ;
 Come with us, for ours the cause to win you
 Ill repute and toil and peace of heart.

THE BAPTIST.

A prophet's word is not in clamour,
 But moves in music as a bird
 When gentle spring-time tries to stammer
 A prophet's word.

Replete with love, its tones enamour
 The faint who fear for hope deferred,
 Nor win the world with worthless glamour.

But he who wields it as a rammer
 Shall leave impressions, dull and blurred ;
 Lightly must fall that holy hammer,
 A prophet's word.

JOHN, *chanting as in a dream.*

Oh, give heed to the true thoughts which hallow
 My song, lest it sink in regret,
 Looking less on the feeble and callow
 Expressions in which it is set.
 Could I chant in the strain of a poet
 Whose music is strange or antique,
 Would your heart listen longer, or show it
 Responds by the crimson-hued cheek ?

Who can fathom the feeling which fashions
 Life's robe ere 'tis rended by death,
 Or persuade to a patience the passions
 That cease but in ceasing of breath ?
 Though our world be so tearful and thornful
 Yet thou mayest plant, unaware,
 The grief that upgrows from a scornful
 Rejection, whose fruit is despair.

Love is lord of the night and the daytime,
 Enthroned in all dreaming as king ;
 And his mood is as wayward as Maytime
 That's mad with the raptures of Spring.

And thy glances are gemmed with the jewel
 All-potent to charm from the fire
 Of the sun-world a flame for the fuel
 Of longing in which I suspire.

Thou, who charmest all ills and disasters
 And bringest good issues from wrong,
 Be propitious to poor poetasters,
 Thou spirit of music and song ;
 For each feeling and thought is a facet
 That sparkles in Poetry's rays,
 And the temper contemns a mere tacit
 Confession of faith and of praise.

JOSEPH.

Yes ; Art may feign and fashion forms
 Of Truth and Beauty linked by Love,
 But Nature's face is rent with storms
 And hopeless as those stars above.

JUDAS.

Where are the songs of olden days
 Which roused the manhood of the soul
 To deeds that won the nation's praise,
 And fettered fears that would control ?

Where are the songs of olden days
 Which echoed like a thunder-roll,
 And rang throughout the endless ways
 That wander from the starry pole ?

THE BAPTIST.

The lyre is broken and the music fled
 Thither whence melodies have no returning,
 For each renounces life to weave instead
 A symphony surpassing man's discerning.

The higher tones are new-born wails of earth ;
 The stronger strain is wrought of ripe endeavour ;
 And its deep undersong is made of mirth
 Which pulses through the spheres of God for ever.

Its choral majesties are moved and surge
 Against the rocks where Time sits, gaunt and hoary ;
 And with a stern, resistless passion urge
 The swift unveiling of eternal glory,
 When earth shall hear the harmony and swell
 With rapture moulded by the miracle.

JUDAS.

And now when we grow faint and falter,
 A million screechings shout our shame ;
 Dumb is the spirit of the psalter
 That once could kindle souls of flame.

THE BAPTIST.

Through the wastes of the star-lighted waves
 And out of the harbour of Night,
 Sails a ship with a cargo of slaves
 Who shiver in terror and fright.

Then the winds, in that passion of spite
 Which roars like a coward and raves,
 Tell the sailors that forces of might
 Have fashioned their watery graves.

And the laughter of losels and knaves
 Is merry in mocking their plight ;
 But their souls are of manhood which braves
 The darkness that curtains the light.

JUDAS.

The ship is Israël ; the sailors,
 The prophets who have led the race
 Of Abraham in spite of railers
 To see the light of Moses' face.

THE BAPTIST.

Not kinship with the patriarch
 Availed for Isaac, but the ram ;
 For God can call from sunless dark
 Enlightened sons for Abraham.

JUDAS.

But Israël has been the Lord's vicegerent
 And witness of his Oneness to the world,
 And o'er the nations, folly-led and errant,
 The banner of his holiness unfurled.

Must we regard our serfdom as the pittance
 Rewarding us for sacrifice and hymn ?
 Does such return assure him an acquittance
 From recompense to faithful Seraphim ?

Better by far have bowed to Bel or Rimmon,
 For they could crown their worshippers with wealth ;
 But we must weep and wail like helpless women,
 And even nurse our hopes in shameful stealth.

JOHN.

Then learn profounder lore,
 That so thou mayest gain
 Thy soul, and evermore
 Live freed from hopeless pain.

There falls upon thy brow
 A ray of light divine,
 For heaven opens now
 And all its wealth is thine.

And yonder I discern
 Fair forms of purest light,
 Which blaze until they burn
 To naught the power of sight.

But seek not wealth nor those,
 The spirits of the blest,
 For farther scenes disclose
 Supreme content and rest.

Thee, Beauty, thee alone,
 We seek by paths untrod,
 To share thy crown and throne
 As one in soul with God.

This is our one desire
 To pass from earth and sense
 To where thy inmost fire
 Consumes with heat intense.

JUDAS.

Thou fool, this is a dream,
 And thou art mocking me
 With formless shews which seem,
 And only seem, to be.

THE BAPTIST.

Vainly, for ever vainly, fancy searches
 For treasure hid beyond the reach of sense ;
 Worse than in vain, for all her efforts purchase
 A doom of spiritual pestilence.

Vainly she boasts her faith to be implicit
 And deems her skill surpassingly adroit ;
 For in her folly she but treads illicit
 And treacherous paths to silliest exploit.

Here in the actual find the God-wrought balance
 Of life which weighs the worth of good and sin,
 And proves less sensitive to myriad talents
 Than to just deeds and stern self-discipline ;
 While death stands by to seize with cruel claws
 The lighter fruits unsunned by duty's laws.

JOHN.

But, priest and prophet, dost thou not remember
 The poet's theme of sacrificial lives ?
 Or hast thou never known the dying ember
 Bear visionary flamelet which survives ?
 So death avails to burst the bond of nature
 And set the spirit free
 From frenzied mood and passion's usurpature
 To live in liberty.

For what is death but rest
 From labours which invest
 One moment in perfervid folly ?
 And life is the supreme
 Quintessence of a dream
 And insubstantial melancholy.

Death is for me a mute and mystic symbol
 Which veils and yet reveals the spheres of truth,
 And is unknown to sense however nimble
 And confident with earth-born fire of youth.
 Dead to the world in fact, or e'en in fancy,
 Freed from its sordidness,
 I roam those realms which toil and necromancy
 Dimly perceive by guess.

And there nor right nor wrong
 Disturbs the reign of song ;
 No drab and stiffened dress of duty
 Compels the symmetry
 And synchrony to flee
 The dream of everlasting beauty.

JUDAS.

Lonely my lot ;
 Pity its pain ;
 God is forgot ;
 Branded the brain ;
 Knowledge is not ;
 Vision is vain.

JOSEPH, *to John*.

Frail poet, many a blast of evil parches
 The brave advancing over human bones ;
 And thou would'st be companion of their marches
 With songs unmeaning as that night-bird's tones.

JOHN, *to the nightingale*.

Voice of the night, whose tones of plaintive sobbing
 Painlessly swathe the heart in sweet regret,
 Art thou bereaved, or dost thou chant the throbbing
 Of thrilling passion in thy canzonet ?

Longing to learn the lonely song of sorrow
 That swells with lavish loveliness of grief,
 Feeblest of poets, I would die to borrow
 Thy throat while moonlight trembles on a leaf.

Why dost thou linger in this land, belated
 And lost to all thy lady-loves who roam
 In flowery isles which western waves created
 To be for aye the songster's springtide home ?

Dost thou remain to succour me in spelling
 The meaning of thy mournful melodies ?
 Yes ; for at last I understand thee, telling
 Eternal woes and world-wide agonies.

JESUS, who has entered.

If thou dost recognise the spirit springing
 To self-expression in the song-bird's tone,
 Tell us the word which it persists in singing
 Through changing moods as various as thine own.

JOHN, as in a dream.

My throat with impetuous throbs
 Is trembling and shaken, and thrilled
 With murmurs and musical sobs,
 And soars into song ere 'tis stilled.

The plainings are never complete,
 But quiver and shiver, and break
 In cries like the shrieks of defeat
 When dream-fettered spirits awake.

In light none has leisure to learn
 Of battles which harrow the heart ;
 And worldlings are weak to discern
 The worth of my passionate art.

But greed and ambition take flight
 When Eternity flows from the stars,
 And darkness alone has delight
 In music which selfishness mars.

My complaint and my pleasure are twin
 And born of the breezes and streams
 For my body is reptile within ;
 My spirit is fashioned of dreams.

I long not for beautiful form
 Or prizes of strength or of skill,
 But pant for a peace in the storm
 Which I have no virtue to still.

At times I attain to the tones
 Which move in the music of mirth
 Till broken with shrillness through groans
 Heard hoarse from the grief-laden earth.

Do visions avail for a bird
 To purchase a life out of death,
 Or shall I be lost as a word
 Is lost in the lulling of breath?

JUDAS.

Does not the heart grow full to bursting
 When manhood masques as feminine
 And mumbles numbers, while we're thirsting
 To drink one drop of freedom's wine.

And naught but falsehood ever grew in
 The soil which pining fancy feigns
 Amid the nation's mass of ruin
 Beswept by fiercest hurricanes.

JOSEPH.

One half thy song has sense and reason,
 And wert thou satisfied to sing
 Of poverty discrowned by treason,
 We'd crown thee as a poet-king.

THE BAPTIST.

Or if thy tones were ripe with teaching
 And nerved mankind to fetter crime,
 What influence was thine and reaching
 Through long neglect to endless time!

JESUS.

Beauty is born in patience or in pining,
 In moods of languor or in lighter mirth,
 While poets weave its opal pall, entwining
 The myriad pulses of the panting earth.

And life is given in the song's emotion,
 Invigorating heart and brain and limbs,
 Kindling the world with rapturous devotion
 And love surpassing e'en the Seraphim's.

Sing as thou wilt, the spirit which inspires thee
 Creates an archetype by which we mete
 Our movement upward ; and the flame which fires thee
 Forbids the faithless from a foul retreat ;
 And God who gave the gift of song to thee
 Shall vindicate the voice of poetry.

JUDAS.

Who art thou ; and what seekest thou to-night ?

JESUS.

Jesus ; and come to share the Baptist's rite.

THE BAPTIST.

'Tis rather mine to be baptized of thee.

JESUS.

Nay ; grant my prayer, for so it needs must be.

JOHN.

For so thou would'st absorb God's word in all.

THE BAPTIST, *to Jesus.*

Then follow me, as David followed Saul.

(They two go out.)

JOHN, *chanting.*

Within a thornset dell

A child lay down to rest :

A faded floweret fell,

She dreamed, upon her breast.

She wept ; the flower was pleased,

And woke to life and smiled ;

And straight a longing seized

The spirit of the child.

She rose, and sought the flower

Which came to her in dream ;

But found it not in bower,

Or field, or silver stream.

But, while she searched in vain,

It drooped within the eyes

Of those who pine in pain

For one to sympathise.

JUDAS.

Why change thy madness for weak sentiments ?

JOSEPH.

Or dost thou wake from dreams to sober sense ?

JOHN.

I played with pleasure, shaped of the shivering
Of star-lit treasure, borne on the quivering

Of leaves at leisure from the terror

Wasting the world with the winds of error.

The moody madness wronged in caressing me,

Unnerved with sadness life in repressing me

Thus held from gladness ; till a duty,

Blest in its gift to me, shewed new beauty.

JESUS, *to the Baptist, as they return.*

Farewell, farewell, for God impels

My soul to seek the wilderness ;

And ere I go where darkness dwells,

Farewell ; farewell, for God impels

My life to paths which terror tells

Are painful paths of dire distress.

Farewell, farewell, for God impels

My soul to seek the wilderness.

THE BAPTIST.

Farewell, a darksome world of dirges

Is fashioned by a miracle,

And from its inmost heart emerges

“ Farewell.”

The force of blindfold nature surges,

And in its shock is heard a knell,

Announcing that our path diverges.

But lo, the world is scarred by scourges

And holden fast in hatred's spell ;

Then go, for love of mortals urges

Farewell.

JOSEPH.

Art mad, to turn from man to solitude ?

JUDAS.

He seeks the hermit's visions which delude.

THE BAPTIST.

There God will visit undistracted hearts.

JOHN, *as Jesus goes out.*

Nay ; Jesus, stay. O God, the light departs.
(He falls in a faint.)

JUDAS.

So fast, so fast,
 A life has flown,
 And all is past
 Ere aught is known.

One word is spelt ;
 One thought has thrilled ;
 One fear is felt ;
 And all is stilled.

JOSEPH.

No grief, though death has taken
 An early sheaf ;
 And though our breasts be shaken,
 No grief.

He sleeps within the star-land,
 Nor laughs, nor weeps,
 But, crowned with peace for garland,
 He sleeps.

The night grows full of faces
 We loved in light ;
 And soon our day embraces
 The night.

Till then our faith shall quicken
 The minds of men,
 Nor shall we faint or sicken
 Till then.

And song shall shrine our glory,
 And love prolong
 Our lives in tearless story
 And song.

THE BAPTIST.

Stand not in idle meditation ;
 Death has not sealed his countenance ;
 His heart regains its true pulsation,
 And he awakens from his trance.

JOHN, *wildly*.

The Spirit rapt me in a miracle
 That so the Tempter might display his wiles ;
 And see ! the grey inhabitants of hell
 Are seeking to pollute me with their smiles.
 The purple phantoms of the baneful stars
 Fly through the dampness floating in the dark ;
 And moonbeams mock me, grinning through their bars
 In pallid gleams, impassive, cold and stark.
 God hides his face from me, his chosen one,
 And bids his angels leave me to my hour ;
 For I was born to be his word, his son,
 The last expression of his love and power.
 But look, my legions come from every clime,
 The souls I quickened with the life of song,
 The fairy fancies robed in rhythmic rhyme
 And worlds redeemed from wretchedness and wrong.
 The fiends grow faint, and offer me their world
 If I will worship falsehood, strength and lust ;
 But at my word the worthless gift is whirled
 To death's domain and pounded into dust.
 My world, resplendent in its silver mist,
 Is throned for ever in an azure haze,
 Chanting to God the perfect eucharist
 And thrilling him with everlasting praise.
 The devils fly, and God can breathe in peace,
 For I establish thus his ancient plan ;
 But I must travail yet, till my decease
 Has won the God in men to worship Man.
 They bound my arms, reviled me in their scorn ;
 And now they wait to see me sacrificed :
 They wreathe my burning brow with bitter thorn.
 Behold, I am the son of God, the Christ.

SCENE 4.—The House of Simon, a pharisee, at Capernaum.

(THE sunlight falls on the brilliant hues
Of robes which are worn by the crowd
Who throng the court and discuss the news
In tones that are eager and loud.

And there it seems as if woe released
Her victims, the poor and distressed,
To view the scene of the morning feast
Which Simon prepares for his guest.

His friends recline on the cushions around
A table which, painted in red,
Is raised a foot from the carpeted ground ;
And Simon is set at the head.

And next him Jesus is lying, and sees
A woman, well-known in the street,
Who weeps while, crouching and bowed on her knees,
She washes the dust from his feet.

With tears removing the dust and the soil,
And drying his feet with her hairs,
She breaks the casket of spikenard and oil
Which hangs from the necklace she wears.)

THOMAS.

May never a dream of ambition invite
My soul to adventure a dangerous flight,
To burden itself with contrition and care,
An object of malice and envious stare.

But never the absence of spirit deprave
 My life to the state of a down-trodden slave,
 Whose heart does not heave with the loathing of life
 Nor seeks an escape by the noose or the knife.

I'd live in the twilight of place and of truth,
 And, casting away all the dreams of my youth,
 Abide in contentment, nor ever would feel
 The pride of position or raging of zeal.

SIMON, *one of the Assassins.*

I'd feel the surging rage and scorn
 Of breasts in which rebellion's born,
 Where Freedom's fearless frenzies warn
 The world of light
 That mocks the murky mists of morn
 And ends the night.

JOHN.

I would be great with a greatness surpassing the fame which expires
 On the lips of humanity,
 Paying no heed to the voice of the world, though it shout till it tires
 In its feverish vanity ;
 Ever to stand, like an angel, regardless of men, whether gazing
 Admiring, or sneeringly ;
 Hear but the voices of eloquent silence, nor blaming nor praising,
 But chanting endearingly :

Sleep, sleep in sweet and undisturbed repose,
 For now thou hast attained thy rest :
 No more thy wearied heart is stung, or knows
 The fears which once profaned thy breast.
 Sleep, sleep, the thunders roar, and tempests rage,
 And storm-cries shriek, and whirlwinds fill
 The scene, which thou didst tread in pilgrimage,
 Until it will, like thee, be still.

SIMON, *called the Rock.*

And so, would'st thou in death forget
 The world with all its stress and strife,
 Nor pay thy debt with one regret
 For ills besetting human life ?

But griefs, although, 'tis said, they break
 The gentle heart in which they make
 Their far-from-gentle home, yet wake
 The soul to live for honour's sake.

The noble instincts, hopes that lead
 A man to wait a nobler doom
 Than for a while to rot and feed
 The worms which breed within the tomb,

Are surely rays divine, and stray
 From light that makes eternal day ;
 Not fatal gleams, like those which play
 On marshy ground and lead astray
 The traveller on his midnight way.

THOMAS.

In the hushing of music and laughter,
 In silence which sobers the brave,
 We may wonder what waits for us after
 The march to the grave.

We may long for a life that is deathless
 And strong in a surer resource
 Than the body which, bloodless and breathless,
 Is flung from the course.

It will spur on the soul to endeavour,
 Fulfilling the yearnings of youth ;
 And we'll live in the lie, for we'll never
 Awake in the truth.

SIMON, *the Rock*.

There are feelings unrecorded,
 Fancies never framed in speech,
 Deeds of valour unrewarded,
 Aims a mortal cannot reach.

Are these born to fume and dwindle,
 Like the foam which crowns a wave,
 Or to fire the brain and kindle
 Hopes of life beyond the grave ?

THOMAS.

So fancy feigns a splendour in the clouds
 Which fevered thought suspends o'er dying souls ;
 As suns in setting gild their fleecy shrouds
 To crown themselves with mimic aureoles.

SIMON, *the Rock*.

But when thou would'st arrange in ordered thought
 The myriad sights and sounds surprising thee,
 Then thy philosophy dissolves in naught
 Unless the good revive in worlds to be.

THOMAS.

I spin no speculative scheme of Nature,
 Explaining all the universe of Fact ;
 Nor fling a plummet, wrought of nomenclature,
 In boundless and eternal tides of Act.

What power have I to bind with bare idea
 The diverse forms which multiply until
 The world is crowded and no panacea
 For want appears except the leave to kill ?

Nor dare I claim to know of an here-after
 For us when ears are deaf and eyes grow dim ;
 Nor would I choose excessive tears or laughter,
 Or yield my reason for a poet's whim.

SIMON, *the Rock*.

All await the rending of the veiling
 Which conceals the life that follows this ;
 And amid their effort and their failing
 Look up thitherward for endless bliss.

THOMAS.

Earth has squalor, and the Heavens splendour ;
 Earth has fever, and the Heavens calm ;
 Yet what man is eager to surrender
 Earth's most smarting wound for Heaven's balm ?

Can it be we think a bold profession
 Stills the storms of fears when thought-lit glooms
 Pass across the soul in swift succession,
 Shattering its temples and its tombs ?

We persuade our fellows to denial
 Of the fact before their eyes and ours ;
 And with candles falsify the dial
 When the shadow speaks of fleeting hours.

Night shall come in spite of all our striving,
 Nature mocking all the hopes we feign ;
 Nor lament that there is no surviving
 This poor life for mortals tired of pain.

SIMON, *one of the Assassins.*

If hymns adorning death
 Should be but perfumed breath
 To soothe the sense,
 Or torch's falsest flare
 Which by its ghastly glare
 Makes dark more dense,

Why lose our lives in vain,
 Nor gird our loins to gain
 A Heaven here ?

/// || For wrath still rules in wrong, |
 || And scorns the righteous song |
 || Of saint and seer. |

JOHN.

And would you satisfy my full ambition ?
 Then make perpetual music in my heart ;
 Endow my brain with poet's intuition ;
 And drape my dreams in all the hues of art.

Give me to understand what Nature stutters
 Through all her moods and in her million tones ;
 And tell me all that mirth or madness mutters,
 With all that peace resigns and patience owns.

Charm me with faith that knows not change or rancour ;
 Give me a memory unsoiled by shame ;
 Show me a future where my soul at anchor
 Rides royally on sunlit seas of fame.
 Yet I would sacrifice these gifts to creep
 Through dreams of mystery to peaceful sleep.

THOMAS.

We dream of Heaven till the falsehood stifles
 The sense of wrong and injury on earth,
 Soothing our sorrows with a poet's trifles
 And with his madness murdering our mirth.

And lo, through all the scrolls of our long story,
 Chaos is monarch of the gloomy years,
 For men bemocked their minds with royal glory
 Or Paradise restored in other spheres.

Let dreams persist to be a feigned oasis
 In life's Egyptian bondage for a maid ;
 But we are men, and build upon a basis
 Of Nature's force and reason unafraid,
 That so the pyramid survive the spell
 Which dreamers weave to make the earth a hell.

JUDAS.

We need a voice whose tones shall sway
 All men and heal our sense of wrongs
 With visions of a future day
 To which full recompense belongs.

JESUS.

I hear it in the whispers of the wind,
 In every sob and lisp of the stream,
 In sadder notes which memory would bind
 To weave a music-mantle round a dream.

I hear it in the infant's wailing cry,
 In sighs which live in grief on woman's breath,
 In gasps of men who would, yet dare not, die,
 But hope to find relief at last in death.

It speaks the earthly language of my heart,
 And throbs, in love and anger, soft and wild;
 It tells of earth, her storm-clouds rent apart,
 In smiles reflecting Heaven undefiled.

JAMES, *brother of Simon the Assassin.*

Hope is fleeting,
 Still retreating
 Into gloom,
 Where its glimmer,
 Growing dimmer,
 Lights the tomb.

SIMON, *one of the Assassins.*

In the past there were torrents of trouble
 And floods of despair,
 And each life disappeared as a bubble
 That burst in the air.

In the present the spirit is frightened
 With frenzy and gloom,
 And the hopes are disheartened which brightened
 The dark of the tomb.

JESUS.

O'er the darkness of woe and of weeping
 There flashes afar
 From the future, wherein it is sleeping
 And dreaming, a star.

It is tearful and winged with the warning
 That day has withdrawn,
 But returns in the spring of the morning
 To herald the dawn.

JAMES, *brother of Simon the Assassin.*

But, if never a thought of the future impel
 With the glories of heaven or horrors of hell,
 Can a man be unmoved by the spectres that glare
 'Mid the torture of fasting and struggle of prayer,
 When the fiend strives to strangle his faith with his fears,
 And his spirit is spent in a passion of tears?

THOMAS.

But why should we attempt to bear
 The burden others' sins prepare,
 And what can any man attain
 In spending thus his heart and brain ?
 For, while the hero lives, a yell
 Of execration startles hell ;
 But when, rejected, scorned, he dies,
 We clothe his life in splendid lies,
 And tell the legends o'er and o'er,
 With prophecies which went before.

MATTHEW.

'Tis true the heart, that's good and brave,
 Is often by the rulers slain :
 The people wake it from its grave
 To live in worship once again.

For those who sway the sword of state
 Can never view without distrust
 The flinging wide of freedom's gate
 Or manhood rising from the dust.

But we, who pant from hour to hour
 With poor man's toil and poor man's grief,
 Will turn to him who boasts of power
 To bring us justice and relief.

When once I served beneath the king,
 In Herod Antipas I sought
 The Man of God whom psalmists sing ;
 But all my dreaming came to naught.

As each pretends the holy oil
 Has set him for the task apart,
 We suffer hunger, pain and toil
 To follow him with eager heart.

But surely now our Jesus' word,
 Simple as truth and yet sublime
 Is like a song in which is heard
 The message of a newer time.

JOHN.

I lit the years of youth
 With fancy's beam,
 And touched the robe of truth
 In dream.

Then all of life was gold
 Without alloy,
 A mine, with wealth untold
 Of joy.

Till, shadowed o'er with gloom,
 The life, so brief,
 Became a living tomb
 Of grief.

But henceforth, undismayed,
 I'll wait, nor weep,
 Until my life is laid
 To sleep.

PHILIP.

Fuming and fretting,
 Onward we travel,
 Sobbing in setting
 Feet on the gravel.

Sharp are the splinters ;
 Thorny the hedges ;
 Whirlwinds and winters
 Live on the ledges.

Chasm and stone-shower
 Wait for the brave band,
 Sparing some lone flower,
 Mark of the grave-land.

Darkness grows deeper ;
 Steeper the passes ;
 Brushwood and creeper
 Tangle with grasses.


Summits are shrouded ;
 Moon-beams diminish ;
 Star-light is clouded :
 When shall we finish ?

JOHN.

Why not leave the world of feud and faction,
 Watch in peace from far the forces surging ?
 See their reckless aim and restless action
 Ever to a single issue verging,
 All in naught or merest chaos merging.

See the Sphinx regarding all the ages
 With a glance untroubled by emotion :
 See the god adored by eastern sages,
 Deaf to all his worshippers' devotion,
 Sleeps like sunlight on the tranquil ocean.

PHILIP.



Let your picture of patience be painted
 In hues of the rose,
 For its faith never faltered or fainted
 In terror of snows.

Though it pales with the pallor of passion
 Its heart can unfold
 All those founts of affection which fashion
 A treasure of gold.

It may blush as if dipt in the day-dawn
 And drest in a dream,
 Or reflect back the pearl of the grey dawn
 As mantled in cream.

It is graced with the glory and splendour
 Of sea and of sun ;
 But it always is tearful and tender
 And deeply undone.

JESUS.

Deep calls to deep ;
 Loud is the chorus ;
 Storm-torrents leap
 Madly before us.

Tempests arise,
 Wild in their raging ;
 Shrill are their cries,
 Ruin presaging.

Cloud-masses drift
 Onward in thunder ;
 Light-flashes rift
 Darkness asunder.

Fearless of fear,
 Calm in your wonder,
 Listen and hear
 God in the thunder.

PHILIP.

But who is strong enough to cope
 With ills that o'er the world prevail ?
 The scheme in which we put our hope
 Can only bravely, nobly, fail.

Why should we wring our hearts, and grieve
 For multitudes of mournful mood ?
 Can human sympathy relieve
 The crowds who cry and faint for food ?

JESUS.

Nay, my Philip, every human heart is beating,
 Ever swelling, ever growing
 With indwelling, grace-bestowing,
 Powers of sympathy which, manhood's state completing,
 Make a mortal more than mortal in his vigour,
 Seldom lending thought to pleasure,
 But expending all his treasure
 In assuaging grief that rages in its rigour.

Now the effort seems but thrown away and wasted ;
 And illusion, quickly dying,
 Leaves confusion, death-defying,
 Far more grievous for the bliss which fled untasted ;
 But the kindly soil of human hearts will nourish
 And will cherish efforts slighted :
 Though they perish as if blighted,
 Ages hence the seeds of noble deeds will flourish.

When the earth appears in cold and wintry beauty,
 Snows are winding round the mountain,
 Ice is binding fast the fountain,
 And the chilling blast is killing love and duty ;

But the earth profusely, in the spring-time, giving
 All the wealth of all her being,
 And the health of nature seeing,
 Shares and wears the fair and rare delight of living.

A WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

Rabbi Jesus, look on me :
 On thy feet my scalding tears are falling ;
 In my heart are hateful fears appalling :
 Jesus, let me cling to thee.

When I lay, a helpless infant, sleeping,
 Borne upon my mother's breast,
 Watch and guard the angel-hosts were keeping :
 God was smiling on my rest.

Soon the dawn that blest the child would
 Merge into the noon of day :
 Passions fierce and feelings wild would
 Bend my life to pleasure's sway.

Then the bliss of loving and the gladness :
 Now the anguish, scorn and dread ;
 Now remorse and soul-consuming madness,
 Broken heart and fevered head.

SIMON, *a pharisee*.

Master, beware of that woman unholy :
 Look at her features engraven with sin
 Vile and degraded, her body is solely
 House for the devils who riot within.

JESUS.

Once two poor men in distress
 Were fain to borrow :
 One, too sanguine of success,
 Would pledge the morrow
 For a loan of sums immense ;
 But the second
 Followed judgment and good sense,
 Duly reckoned
 All his power to pay, and deemed
 Small loan the best.

Then they failed : in grief one seemed
 With dread opprest :
 Not the other, for he dreamed
 Himself still blest.
 Tell me now, if he who lent
 Would cease to sue,
 Which would know, as freed he went,
 The love most true.

SIMON, *a pharisee.*

The greater love is doubtless shewn
 By him who had the greater loan.

JESUS.

The lesser gift was given thee,
 A form of law and prophets famed in olden story,
 A land which shall hereafter see
 The Lord's Anointed reign in universal glory.

The greater gift of God was given
 To her who kneels, and weeps, and cries aloud my name,
 A form once fair, a soul love-driven,
 And light which flashes from her eyes in fiercest flame.

The law, as taught by thee,
 The lives of all oppresses :
 She, in captivity
 To sin, her soul distresses.
 Thy prophets' light, vanished in sadness :
 Her hopes, once bright, banished in madness.

Now forgiveness, gently stealing
 O'er the tempest in her soul,
 Pacifies her faith's appealing,
 Making shattered spirit whole.

Now her grateful heart is glowing
 With its life renewed in pain :
 Now her life-stream, once more flowing
 Godwards, lives in love again.

No water didst thou place for me :
 She bathed my feet with tears.
 No kiss have I received from thee :
 She kissed my feet, all fears.

No oil was poured upon my head :
 Anointed were my feet.
 Arise, for all thy shame is fled :
 Returned is love more sweet.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

O soul of love, thy words, enchaining
 My heart with hopeful love, reveal
 The God who hears the lone complaining
 In blighted woman's mute appeal.

To follow thee, be this my mission,
 To serve in menial ministry,
 To share thy toil, endure derision,
 And live in glad captivity.

MARY, *entering*.

Jesus, my son, return again with me,
 Nor trust the promise of deceitful dreams :
 My soul is prey to dread anxiety
 And sees the issue of thy daring schemes.
 Oh, rest content in poor, unknown estate ;
 Nor seek the prophet's place, the prophet's fate.

JUDAS.

Heed not the voice of despair.
 What for the waste of a life can atone ?
 Haste to the city, for there,
 Waiting for thee, is a sceptre and throne.

Crushed by the tread of the foe,
 Prey of the nations, the people is grieved ;
 Rise thou and strike a strong blow ;
 Show us the national glory retrieved.

SIMON, *a pharisee*.

Is this the man to mount Messiah's throne,
 Who talks, and tells some pretty fables ?
 A peasant, poor, unlearned and alone,
 A centre he of village babels.

JUDAS.

My father, Simon, loves to tell
 Of glories gleaming through the mists of morning :
 Around my heart he wove a spell
 Of soul-absorbing dreams, of fierceness scorning
 All pains in hope to raise the race,
 Our race that writhes in restless indecision,
 To cleanse again the Holy Place
 And crown the whole with God in prophet-vision.
 The world awaits a mighty king,
 And, peaceful, stands in silent expectation :
 Arise, and let the nation sing
 Again the ancient Songs of Restoration.

JESUS.

Nay, my Judas, I would rather
 Raise again the kingdom in each breast,
 Where the spirit of my Father
 Should be welcomed as the dearest guest.
 See what broken hearts are lying
 In my path and fill the world with sighs ;
 See the veil of grief undying
 Laid in bitterness on dying eyes.
 Yes ; I rise to reign in splendour
 Such as earthly king has never known ;
 My sole sceptre, love most tender ;
 And in grateful hearts my love-built throne.

JUDAS.

But thou wilt slay the nation's foemen
 And brand with shame each renegade
 When David's throne fulfils the omen
 Which John the Baptist's word displayed.
 For life is not of milk and honey,
 But lives in all that we abhor
 Till Judah's sky grows calm and sunny
 And Chaos dies in Yahveh's war.
 And while the women's hands dishevel
 Their hair, and while they weep and wail,
 The men who dare outmatch the devil
 Find strength and wit of more avail.

JESUS.

If life is a battle and nature a chaos,
Much sorrow is born of our efforts to frame
The kingdoms of earth that have strength to dismay us,
Full-fed with our fear and enthroned in our shame.

Though nature be shaken with fiery upheaval,
And wrinkled with traces of ice and of flood,
More fierce is the truce in the triumph of evil
When earth is besmirched with the blackness of blood.

True peace and true war are the kingdom of heaven
Where minds have no master save God the supreme,
Where gladness is multiplied seventy times seven,
For dread disappears as a horrible dream.

The spirit who spurns the defects in the fortune
Of want or of weakness which statesmen award
Grows blest in the Blest, nor desires to importune
The Spirit it owns as its Father and Lord.

SCENE 5.—An Interlude.

The Market-place of Shechem.

(THE children dance around the market-place
And fill the town with laughter, light and gay,
The while their coloured robes and pleasant play
Enrich the scene with joy and gentle grace.

The elders, seated by with solemn face,
In slow dispute wear out the waning day ;
The younger men describe some village fray
And feats in mimic strife or doubtful race.

Behind are flat-roofed houses in array ;
Steep, barren cliffs ; and, far above, we trace
The height of Gerizim in purple-grey,
Whose rugged summit cleaves the azure space
Where clouds, in listless languor, slowly stray,
Like frosted fleeces fringed with crimson lace.)

ADAR, *a boy, entering and speaking to Asher.*

Here are some flowers I gathered to-day :
I brought them home for you.
How, in their pride, they delight to display
Their tints of white and blue.

Here is the poppy that colours the fields
With scarlet, rich and fine :
Here is the gold which the apricot yields,
Whose leaves, like silver, shine.

ASHER, *an old man.*

All these, my child, are beautiful to me,
And linked in thought to days I'll see no more,
When dreaming youth would paint the future o'er
With joys to come and glories yet to be.

But not in sadness does my memory cling
To days long past, nor would I feel again
The throb of passion or the thrilling pain
Of life that buds and blossoms in its spring.

The dreams of youth and thoughts of riper years
Are mine ; and though the winter, wan and chill,
May seize upon my heart, and, ruthless, kill,
I see beyond : again the spring appears.

But see, these flowers are sacrificed and give
To us their fragrance, colour, form and glow
To charm us for a moment, and bestow
In dying all their wealth on us who live.

And yet, not all their wealth, for that is less
Since they are torn from life and power to grow :
Alas, that selfishness can never know
How worlds of beauty, undesired, may bless.

ADAR.

Thou art not grieved : I only thought
To show my love for thee, and sought
The fields where flowers appear most fair.

ASHER.

No ; children's love is to the lone
A light dispelling grief and care.

ADAR.

Had you no children of your own ?

ASHER.

Two little boys were mine to keep,
And good little boys were they :
One of them loved to pine and weep ;
The other one loved to play.

One of them wandered everywhere :
 Wherever he chanced to go,
 Glancing around, he fancied there
 The symbols and signs of woe.

Then would the other view the earth,
 And smilingly turn to me,
 Say that he saw the birth of mirth
 In glee of the land and sea.

Seeing the world as it appears
 When coloured by human eyes,
 One of them saw a vale of tears ;
 The other but cloudless skies.

Everyone blessed the sight of him
 Whose smile was as bright as day :
 Seeing the tearful, eyes grew dim,
 And glances were turned away.

Two little boys are laid to sleep ;
 However, the worlds they made
 Linger while men shall laugh or weep
 And live in the light or shade.

ADAR.

And where do your little boys sleep ?

ASHER.

In a grave, where a mantle of flowers
 Is growing and long grasses creep
 To protect them from storm-winds and showers.

ADAR.

Who killed them ?

ASHER.

God, who ever wills the best,
 Beheld their lives with love and gave them rest.

ADAR.

It was wicked of God : Yes ; and when I am grown
 I will climb up the mountain, and where
 He is living alone in the height, on his throne,
 I will meet him and fight with him there.

ASHER.

Nay; little Satan, believe that his will
 Is to girdle with goodness the earth :
 When he appears to afflict or to kill,
 He is bringing new lives to the birth.

ABSALOM, *a young man, entering with Zadok.*

The Jew we found but yesterday,
 Alone and faint upon the way,
 Has passed from us. Our help no more
 Avails to cure him and restore.
 No more may Nabal boast his power :
 His victim needs must curse the hour
 He fell into his hands.

ZADOK, *an old man.*

Now wait
 The white-robed angels at the gate
 Of Heaven to free him from disease
 And cleanse his soul from sin and doubt.

NABAL.

The only gate of Heaven he sees
 Is that by which they drive him out.

ABSALOM.

Ah, thou art only wise to kill :
 The sick are ever doomed to lose
 Their lives to prove thy vaunted skill.

NABAL.

I practise only on the Jews.

SUSANNAH, *entering and singing.*

Rebecca discovered a stranger stand
 One eve by the fountain's side :
 He came from a prince in a far-off land,
 Who sought her to be his bride.

Oh, when shall a messenger come to me
 With tidings like those to tell?
 I'll follow him over the land and sea,
 Through death and the gates of hell.

THE OTHER MAIDENS, *also coming from the well.*

Here is our poet returning;
 And where has he tarried so long,
 Leaving us lonely and yearning
 For tones of a love-breathing song?

ABSALOM.

#

What is song?
 A sigh in sable,
 Or a wrong
 In folds of fable,
 Or a chain
 Of art to tether
 Love and pain
 And hope together.

SUSANNAH.

Song is fire
 Which prophets kindle,
 In attire
 From poets' spindle;
 Or a star
 Of truth and treasure,
 Flaming far
 In light and pleasure.

ASHER.

A bard may view with half-closed eye
 The play of light on wood and stream
 Till Heaven flash from out the sky
 In one supreme and subtle gleam.

But poets who have boldly trod
 The sad and painful paths of earth
 Are priests and prophets of the God
 Who gave their work and knows their worth.

ELNATHAN, *entering.*

I wandered and roved through the groves where the silver streams glide
And watched how the waters would leap down the mountain's steep side
And felt, with the senses awakened, wherever I trod,
The breath of the breeze on my brow, like the breathing of God.

I heard in the stillness of morning the musical note
Which calls on the creatures of God, whether near or remote,
To join in the anthem of praise, which ascends, like the mist,
When Morn and the mountain have met in embraces and kissed,
Until, in the noonday, the anthem is loudest and swells
With tones as sonorous as roars of the ocean, and tells
Of passionate striving that dies, in its madness, away,
When eventide hushes to silence the chorus of day.

Then perfumes, unnumbered, arose from the herbage to fill
With exquisite sweetness the air of the valley and hill.
The winds wafted swiftly the sound of the magical word
Which, only by ear of a woman or poet, is heard ;
And when it is mentioned a mantle of beauty and bliss
Envelopes the world, like the blush of a maiden's first kiss.
It thrills in the nightingale's song, in the coo of the dove,
In whispers of roses and lilies ; its name—

THE MAIDENS.

It is love.

ELNATHAN, *to Susannah.*

Love that has not one single claim
To be beloved in turn by thee,
But that it must remain the same
Through sunshine and adversity,
Controls my heart and motions me
To offer in despite of shame
Love that has not one single claim
To be beloved in turn by thee.

The phantoms of a future fame
Shudder, and faint, and cease to be ;
And all my hopes prove halt and lame
As they arise and crowd to see
Love that has not one single claim
To be beloved in turn by thee.

SUSANNAH.

Why didst thou leave us,
 Thou who art dearest
 Of all that we own ?
 Why thus bereave us,
 Poet, and grieve us,
 Us, who receive you,
 Ever believe you,
 Us, whom thou cheereest,
 The lives that are lone ?

ELNATHAN.

I went to the mountains to hunt for a thought.

THE MAIDENS.

Then come, sir, and tell us what prey you have brought.

ELNATHAN.

I heard a brooklet sing one night,
 As it looked at the moon above :
 Descend to me, my heart's delight,
 That my life may be lost in love.

The moon replied, and tossed her head :
 I am not for a waif like thee ;
 If I should condescend to wed,
 I would marry the deep blue sea.

The brooklet's smile grew still more sweet,
 As it shimmered and danced for glee
 And said : I'll hasten on to meet
 My beloved in the deep blue sea.

The moon said naught, but shone more bright ;
 And I looked at the brooklet's bed
 And saw the moon, and knew that night
 That the moon and the brook were wed.

NABAL.

What tales these youngsters tell ! I think he said
 The moon and brook had power to speak and wed.
 When I was young, some threescore years ago,
 There was a poet here, whose verse would flow
 More smooth ; and he could tell a tale quite free
 From foolish talk about the moon or sea.

ASHER.

Take heart, my poet, after many a year
 Thy name shall mentioned be, and some child here
 Shall crown thy memory with praise and say :
 There lived a poet in my younger day.

ELNATHAN.

But praise is sweet to living ears,
 And I would have the earnest now
 Of glories which the future years
 Shall wreath about my lifeless brow.

SUSANNAH.

Why should'st thou care for it, seeing we love thee ?
 All of us love thee : well ; all but me ;
 And, like the mountain that rises above thee,
 Thine is the crown of eternity.

Though, like the mountain, thy forehead arises,
 Never adorned by a wreath of the earth ;
 Yet 'tis thine eyes which the light first surprises
 When, in the morning, it comes to the birth.

Here is a garland of flowers as a token
 Thou art our prince in the kingdom of song
 Where, as in dreamland, the silence is broken
 Only by love and the conquest of wrong.

Come, then, and sing for us ; sing to our dances :
 Thou wilt confess thee as more than repaid,
 Fired by applause of the youth and the glances
 Flashing like swords from the eyes of each maid.

ELNATHAN.

What shall I sing ; or gay, or grave ;
 Of life on land, or ocean wave ;
 The brave man skilled to fight, nor fly ;
 The love that wept, but could not die ?

SUSANNAH.

Surprise with skill prehensive
 Some beauty ere it dies,
 To yield a more intensive
 Surprise.

Disclose the secret sobbing
 Within the blushing rose ;
 And, that which soothes its throbbing,
 Disclose.

As tears oft shine prophetic
 Of fair and happy years,
 Sing of lone love, pathetic
 As tears.

ELNATHAN.

Unmeasured splendour and unfathomed yearning
 Compose existence, yet are unexpressed ;
 And myriad miracles are mute, returning
 To die unuttered in their mother-breast ;
 Nor can a pang surpass my heart's, discerning
 How weak are words to answer its behest ;
 For all things fade, nor can my feeble breath
 Preserve one glory from the gloom of death.

The forms of beauty build a fairy palace
 Of pensive shades and tints of pallid blue,
 Whose dome's the sun, and from his burnished chalice
 Is flowing light of every flaming hue,
 Until our souls are lead and hearts grow callous
 Through watching wonders springing ever new ;
 But were they keen as once, they could not give
 Their thought a language that the thought might live.

The world's wild music holds my mind in tension,
 Or soothes it with a melody benign ;
 Though oft the discords shatter thought's suspension
 And force my heart to feign an anodyne
 Lest that my soul attain a new dimension
 To grow in grace and vigour more divine ;
 And thus the anthem dies, nor may my art
 Treasure one passage for my panting heart.

The universe of transient illusion,
 Wrought on the surface of deep floods of tears,
 Withered by winds of fever and confusion
 And fretted by the limits of the years,
 In hastening to an impotent conclusion
 When Death shall rule throughout the starless spheres,
 Passing in pain, nor have I power to tell
 The tale of earth that holds all heaven and hell.

Ah, could I seize one shadow as it passes,
 Or stay one rapture in the sunbeam's kiss,
 Or learn one whisper of the leaves and grasses,
 My soul would revel in a realm of bliss,
 And spurn the dark despair and doubt's morasses
 Which close our little life's parenthesis ;
 But all things flee, nor have I skill to stay
 The blossom's blush which dies with dying day.

My chant is but an echo of the wailing
 That girds the world as with a ghastly zone,
 The sigh of those whose brilliant youth is paling
 And passing to a sallow monotone,
 Blended with tears of brave men sailing, sailing,
 O'er tides of toil toward tearless lands unknown,
 And hymns of hope, whose melodies compete
 With silence, symbol of a faith's defeat.

THE YOUNG MEN.

Sing us the song the foemen hears
 And straightway takes to flight.

THE MAIDENS.

Sing us a tale of love and tears,
 Of hope and pure delight.

THE OLD MEN.

Sing of the peace of him who nears
 The end of life's long night.

ALL.

Sing us a strain which is free from the fetters of art,
 Swayed by the force of a passion that swells in the heart.

ELNATHAN.

There came a Jewish youth to meet a maid,
 A daughter of Samaria's hated race,
 And for their meeting chose a shaded place
 Where olive branches o'er a fountain played.
 He found her 'mid the gold and scarlet flowers
 Which seemed to form a moon-lit magic ring ;
 Her raiment like the green of leaves in spring ;
 Her mantle darker, like the grass in showers.

Their hearts were heavy, sad and sore dismayed,
 For they must part, or he was forced to face
 The doom of ever infamous disgrace
 Which brands a soldier, by his fears betrayed.

The Jewish priestly king, that John accurst,
 Had chosen him to march against this town
 And raze our Temple, glorious in renown :
 So bade Hyrcanus, of our foes the worst.

She heard the tale in sorrow's silent spell ;
 Her bosom heaved, oppressed beneath its fears ;
 Then weeping sore, she steeped his breast in tears,
 And, kissing him in silence, looked farewell.

He's gone, who was to her a god descending,
 As heathens dream, upon the earth and blending
 A mortal form of beauty past expressing
 With God's own nature, earth and earth-men blessing.

He's gone, but still she stays and waits, delaying,
 To watch the wistful, mournful shadows playing
 About her features in the water clear ;
 Until it seems as if sad tears appear
 In mirrored eyes, and withered leaves enshroud
 Her face till all is hidden by a cloud.

He's gone, and bears in heart and mind a treasured semblance,
 Engraven in his life and set in sad remembrance,
 Of her who shed a light of beauty, rich and tender ;
 For so the floweret in its love-time will surrender
 The riches of its perfume, that the scent may capture
 A straying insect lost in dreams of love and rapture.

He's gone, but she is still his goal, the guide
 Which leads him and will never be denied,
 For him the never-setting, polar star
 Which flames the centre of the worlds afar ;
 And though a cloud conceal it for a day,
 Or feeble mind to other object stray,
 Yet this he knows, that phantom gloom will cease
 And in her love he'll find the perfect peace.

On Shechem's walls her warriors stand
 To watch the Jewish dogs advance :
 The sunlight falls upon the band,
 And gleams from helm and sword and lance.

In joy the earth awoke this morn
 To taste again the joy of life,
 Without a cry or cloud to warn
 The peaceful world of coming strife.

But now, advancing to the fight,
 Behold the Jews, that race abhorred ;
 And Shechem's sons prepare to smite
 The enemies of God the Lord.

The cries of passion, madness, rage ;
 The wounded writhing in their pain ;
 The brute aroused in man to wage
 The deadly war of brutes again.

The old men, bowed in bootless prayer ;
 The wail of women, weird and wild ;
 The young men battling with despair ;
 The blank dismay of maid and child.

Ah, God ; that deeds like these should be :
 The mothers see their infants slain ;
 And youthful brides, while outraged, see
 Their husbands' dying look of pain.

The flames have seized upon the town,
 And cries of piteous grief and woe
 Ascend to God and strive to drown
 The mirth of murderers below.

The Mount of Blessing is ablaze ;
 The Temple flames athwart the skies ;
 And, where the people sang his praise,
 The Lord can hear their dying cries.

Where shall the lover find his maiden ?
 Will he not seek in the captive throng ?
 What though she be with fetters laden,
 He will protect her from shame and wrong.

Would she were there, or where they're heaping
 Those who were breathing at break of day,
 Where now the shades of eve are creeping
 Over the bodies of Murder's prey.

Not there she lies, 'mid heroes slain defending
 Their faith and homes, to whom e'en death is lending
 A glory in defeat and crowns their name
 With deathless wreaths of honourable fame.

But see her corpse, disrobed, dishonoured, thrown
 Among the maidens who, like her, have known
 The fate of women in a captured place,
 Whose hideous murder is their least disgrace.

The awful picture smote his reeling brain,
 And rent his heart with rage and racking pain,
 And broke life's golden goblet, scarcely tasted ;
 While passion, in a ruby river, hasted
 To find a spring within the dull, cold earth,
 By which it might ascend and come to birth
 Once more in rosy flames of fairest flowers
 Arrayed with rich and ruddy hues in bowers
 Where buds and blossoms bloom and blush while keeping
 Their watch and ward o'er winsome maiden sleeping.

Then his faith and hope and youthful gladness
 Vanished, swept away in storms of madness ;
 And a scorching wind of fevered care
 Seemed to blast his spirit with despair.

Voices which the lips of nature send in rapture to the skies
 Were to him the weary weeping of a woe that never dies :
 Nay ; the radiance of the sunshine and the brilliant pictures painted
 On the azure of the heaven were defiled by death and tainted ;
 For they told of passing beauty and of wonders that decay
 When the nightfall robes in darkness all the splendours of the day.

Then the world of stars, so distant, in its solemn rhythmic motion
 Spoke of gods as void of feeling as the heart of placid ocean,
 Who appointed but one pathway for all creatures cursed with breath,
 Leading them from love in dreamland to the slaughter-house of death.

But once, as he lay in a dream-troubled sleep,
 The breath of the night-wind awoke him again ;
 And dread seemed to crush him and palsy to creep
 With chill from his limbs to his heart and his brain.

For, lo, in a vesture of silence and awe,
 And raising a forehead on which he could trace
 The tale of a glorified sorrow, he saw
 His darling who shone with a love-lighted face.
 Her eyes were as clear as a mountain-side spring,
 Reflecting the rays which the stars of the night
 Had sent as the heralds of heaven to fling
 A glory around her and crown her with light.
 Those lips, once as red as the blush of the flower
 The pomegranate bears, never quivered or stirred
 As once in the days when her breathing had power
 To charm with a whisper or rule with a word.
 But silent she stood with the gleam on her head
 Which shone with that paleness of silvery gold
 The moon will display when she lies on a bed
 Of indistinct shadows, so grey and so cold.
 He gazed, and endeavoured to break from the spell
 Which held him enchained with the silence of fear :
 He struggled to speak, that once more he might tell
 The love he had cherished through many a year.
 Then slowly the form of the figure grew faint
 Till, chilled to the soul, he beheld her depart ;
 And casting away all the bonds of restraint,
 He nourished with weeping the pain of his heart.
 But when, like a tempest-tost sea, at the last
 His spirit but heaved through the storm that was past,
 He waited in peace for his death to unite
 His life and her life in the regions of light.

THE MAIDENS.

'Tis sad that hate can rule our fate,
 And kill with grief and sadness
 The love which strives to crown our lives
 And fill the world with gladness.

ZADOK.

'Tis sadder still to view the height
 Of Gerizim against the sky
 And know that there, through Jewish spite,
 Our temple-courts in ruin lie.

No more with splendour, as befits
 Samaria's God, do we adore
 Or fall before him where he sits
 Upon the mount for evermore.

THE YOUNG MEN.

But at last when the dawn of our triumph shall break,
 Then the blood of the heroes, now silent, shall wake
 With a song that shall answer the pleadings which rose
 From the women and aged in the day of our foes ;
 For the sons of Samaria then shall unite
 In the rage of inherited wrong to requite
 All the woes we have suffered, the scorn we have borne ;
 And the friends of Jerusalem ever shall mourn.

ABSALOM.

Still love is the motive of song,
 The love of a man for a maid,
 While duty and loathing of wrong
 Are lacking a voice unafraid.

ASHER.

Do not the flowers in darkness hide
 The toil of duty,
 And crown their loves with all the pride
 And spoil of beauty ?

ABSALOM.

But where is the beauty discerned
 In a time that is selfish and vain,
 Which wails for reward never earned
 And in horror of labour and pain ?
 Each flames for himself and is hoarse
 In the praise of his self-nourished gleams,
 Or dwells in his self-channeled course,
 Like the sluggish and slumbering streams.

ELNATHAN.

I have met it in meadow and mountain,
 In dreams of the past,
 In the songs of the flower and the fountain ;
 And found it englassed

In the gladness which flows from the smiling
 Aglow in the face
 Of a mother or sister, beguiling
 A child with its grace ;
 In the depths of the dreamlands that glimmer
 In eyes of a bride,
 Where affection grows fonder, and dimmer
 The glances of pride ;
 In the glory which crowns an ideal
 Of life at its best,
 When it soars from the slough of the real
 Of strife and unrest.

ABSALOM.

Ah, life is but a being's bane,
 A weary waste of wilful folly,
 A dreary dirge with dull refrain
 In chords of gloom and melancholy.

The rich man trembles for his wealth ;
 The poor man lives in schemes fomented
 By secret clubs which plan in stealth
 A heaven for the discontented.

ELNATHAN, *to Susannah.*

The winds of the woodland, the streamlets in panting,
 The sunlight which sings till it sinks in the sea,
 The stars of the midnight, for ever are chanting,
 Susannah, Susannah, Susannah, to me.

Wherever I wander, my love for thee traces
 Thy form in the shadows and leaves of each tree,
 While fancy reflects from all beautiful faces
 Susannah, Susannah, Susannah, to me.

SUSANNAH.

Thou art my master of musical measures,
 Creator of worlds where my thought loves to roam ;
 I'll be thy slave and preserve all thy treasures
 Of passion, and fashion my heart for their home.

ELNATHAN.

The world is aglow with the gladness of living :
 No hour of the past or of ages to be
 Can match with this moment which sparkles in giving
 Susannah, Susannah, Susannah, to me.

KALBA, *entering*.

I met two men who had been sent
 By Joseph's son to make request
 That, as the day is nearly spent,
 We should afford them food and rest.

ABSALOM.

Of course, your well-known liberality
 Would offer ready hospitality :
 At least no weary one, in want and need,
 Would lack your pious blessing and God-speed.

KALBA.

I never give to beggars, or bestow
 My alms on strangers whom I do not know.
 I might, perchance, receive a rogue or rake.

ABSALOM.

Or entertain an angel by mistake.

KALBA.

But listen : those of whom I tell
 Were going to the Harvest Feast,
 When all the demon powers which dwell
 In Jews appear to be released,
 And building booths of myrtle boughs
 Defile the night with wild carouse,
 With dance and song and maddening din,
 And, Jew-like, revel in their sin.

ABSALOM.

I saw no sin defile the night or day ;
 But holy mirth and innocence held sway.

KALBA.

Thou fool, when Shechem triumphs, thou wilt lose
 Thy share through sinful sympathy with Jews.

JESUS, *entering with his followers.*

Oh, see how the night is approaching ;
 Already the shades are encroaching
 Upon the dominion of day :
 The night-wind is rising and blowing ;
 The night-chill is stealthily sowing
 The seeds of decline and decay.

Attend to the voice of our pleading
 In merciful kindness ; and, heeding
 The prayer of the poor and distress,
 But grant us in pity at least .
 A morsel of food from your feast
 And shelter wherein we may rest.

JOHN.

See, my master, they remain
 In sullen silence, nor reply ;
 Therefore let our prayers constrain
 A fiery vengeance from on high,
 As Elijah caused it rain
 Upon his foes in days gone by.

JESUS.

Not thus, but with a mind of peace,
 Shall we remove their mute disdain ;
 And, manlike, loving man, release
 The heart of man from hate and pain.

ZADOK.

Then why do you, spurning this mountain of God,
 Propose to attend at that Temple of Shame,
 Detested and noted, at home and abroad,
 For evil reports which still cling to its name ?

JESUS.

I go as herald of an age new born
 Whose sons and daughters wake from woe to be
 Delivered from the night of grief and scorn
 Which clouded helpless guilt and poverty.

I go to make a pathway, paved with hearts
 That bleed, to reach a throne of peace and light,
 Before whose love and power all ill departs
 And seeks to shroud itself in endless night.

ABSALOM.

Dost thou think to establish a kingdom of God, and ascend
 To a throne and a crown in the peace and the joy of the world ?
 What could'st thou, a poor peasant, unaided, accomplish to lend
 A glory to clouds which the armies of death have unfurled ?
 Canst thou say to the weak in the wasting of body and mind,
 Be thou healed of the plague and endowed with a vigorous soul ?
 Canst proclaim to the slaves as they languish, repressed and confined,
 You are loosed from your fetters and freed from the tyrant's control ?
 Wilt thou gather the children together within such a fold
 That the demons in men be unable to fashion the chain
 Which they forge of the whispers of sin and destroy, taking hold
 Of the fancy of youth and corrupting its heart and its brain ?
 And the man who is paying the price of inherited sin,
 And the woman abandoned and lost for the love of an hour,
 And the naked, and hungry, and dying, and dead, canst thou win
 To renewal of life by the sway of this coveted power ?

JESUS.

Yes ; for love is almighty and able to fling
 Round the winter of life the renewal of spring,
 And in shedding its riches around on the poor
 Is creating a power that shall ever endure.

NABAL.

But why preserve the weak who still oppose
 The progress of the race, its constant foes ?
 'Tis better each should seek his own delight,
 Enjoy the day ere passing into night.

JESUS.

If love should lose the life of love, and seek
 Its own and not another's happiness,
 It would, self-sacrificing, gain no less
 And win the riches which await the meek.

Nor shall the great rewards of Heaven speak
 Alone, declaring love's assured success ;
 For, in the coming age, the race shall bless
 The hand that helped when it was worn and weak.
 But what reward could weigh with this, to know
 That heart responds to heart ; that kindly tongue
 Can wake love's gentle echoes, till a glow
 Of faith inspires the spirit, wrought and wrung ;
 That simple words of love can lighten woe
 As much as sweetest song by psalmist sung ?

ABSALOM.

We have poisoned the dayspring of love with a diet
 Composed of our hatred and lust,
 Till our lives have no light but the rancour and riot
 Consuming our manhood to dust.

We demand, and we pray, and implore some distraction
 From devils beneath and above ;
 And we're fain to relieve the long tension of action
 With lies of religion or love.

And the terrors of day and of nightfall are equal ;
 The cup is o'erflowing with gall,
 Which we take at the hands of the darkness as sequel
 Of all that is done by us all.

The delights which were sweet to our childhood are acid ;
 And wearied of virtue and vice,
 We can look on the horrors of hell-fire as placid
 And pleasure that's cheap at the price.

ELNATHAN, *to Jesus.*

Be sovran in the world of song
 Because thy tone, sincere and strong,
 Can sway the feelings of the heart
 With power beyond my humble art ;
 And take my wreath, the poet's crown ;
 Before thy feet I lay it down.

SUSANNAH.

Yes, Jesus, reign and satisfy the longing,
 Born of toil that lives and hope that dies away :
 Reign, while, around thee, youths and maidens thronging
 Hail the dawning of the new and brighter day.

See, we would pierce the fateful curtain hiding
 What the future holds, but rashly turn aside
 To dream of golden ages past, confiding
 In the monuments that minister to pride.

Be prophet of the future, realising
 All of him, of whom the prophet Moses told,
 Who comes restoring all things and surprising
 Men with peaceful sway and splendours manifold.

NABAL.

Aye, so the trees besought the bramble's aid,
 As Jotham said so many years ago,
 To form a kingdom, and beneath its shade
 They'd screen themselves from all the winds that blow.

JUDAS.

Not here, not here, but where those world-famed splendours
 Once crowned the throne of Judah's mighty king,
 Thy name shall be enrolled with our defenders
 Whom village-maids and temple-psalmists sing.

MARY.

O Jesus, hearken to my prayer,
 And come away in haste with me :
 Dost thou not see how they prepare
 A trap and snare to ruin thee ?

By every pang a mother bears,
 By all the anguish she must know,
 Oh, listen to my earnest prayers
 And come, and we shall homeward go.

I'll tend thee as in days of yore,
 And thou once more shalt sit by me
 With smiles, like those thy features wore
 In days before this enmity.

Oh, thou canst not refuse me still,
 Nor harshly view thy mother's tears,
 But choose the path which may fulfil
 The hopes that grew with all thy years.

JESUS.

Where the prophets told their vision,
 Meeting scorn and foul derision,
 There I must fulfil my mission,
 Though a fate like theirs be mine.

Still about me darkness, throwing
 Shadows on my path, is growing ;
 Yet, beyond, the world is glowing
 Where the suns of freedom shine.

ZADOK.

Then leave us, feeble, false and faithless one ;
 And when thy short and shameless course is run,
 Recall the day we offered thee the light,
 When thou didst choose the path of sin and night.
 Thy name shall lead the ever-lengthening roll
 Of men, depraved in mind and lost in soul,
 Who pass this holy shrine nor heed the claims
 Of wondrous works and patriarchal names.
 Then go, and find with sinners such a doom
 As tortures thee alive and haunts thy tomb.

ELNATHAN.

Thou star of the morning, though veiled in the mist and o'erclouded,
 Like life in its budding which sorrows and terrors have shrouded,
 Art herald of Man ; and the dawn of his kingdom is breaking,
 For God in the truth and the hope of mankind is awaking.

JESUS.

Sing, poet, sing, to thee the voice is given ;
 Celebrate the day of God, which gleams from far,
 When darkness dies away and clouds are riven
 By the splendour filling all without a bar.

Sing, poet, sing the thoughts and dreams of ages,
 Till those dreams become a hope, and hope a fact :
 Sing with a soaring soul and find thy wages
 In the faith that heroes heed thy voice and act.

ABSALOM, *to Jesus.*

Thou would'st make of his measures the pivots
 Of action and thought,
 And create of his fancies the rivets
 For frames that are wrought
 To support a false faith but outlive its
 Pursual of naught.

As for me, I would hurl a defiance
 At faiths which are strong,
 And refuse to endure a compliance
 With dreams which prolong
 The subjection of reason and science
 To story and song.

Yet the reason of man is benighted
 And sees not the light,
 But is watching the world-ways, affrighted,
 And cowers at the sight,
 Though its pride has encountered and slighted
 The Truth and the Right.

NABAL, *to Jesus.*

Begone, and let thine evil dream enthrall
 Thy soul, and may its tendrils round thee twine,
 And bear thee golden fruit but sour as gall,
 Like that which hangs upon the Dead Sea vine.

JOHN.

Thy path of pain and death in cold disdain
 Shall win the world to worship and attain
 A calmer splendour than the starry spaces,
 While Art shall yield her life of loves and graces
 To mark with triumph-song and princely fane
 Thy path of pain.

Then greed shall kindle minds of men insane
 With hope to grasp the crown of God and gain
 A throne like thine where selfishness embraces
 Thy path of pain.

But thou shalt live and watch the endless train
 Of lives whose love of light shall prove their bane,
 And in the passion pictured in their faces
 Thy soul of truth and sacrifice retraces
 With broken heart that bleeds in vain, in vain,
 Thy path of pain.

ABSALOM.

Are sorrow and anguish supreme and eternal,
 That thou would'st contrive of them scaffolds to raise
 A shrine which surpasses the virile and vernal
 Live temples the sun-god creates for his praise
 Of all of the gladness his glory surveys ?

Proclaim with the clamour of failing conviction
 The beauty of palsy and bounty of pain,
 Till the world is bewitched with the charm of the fiction,
 And spurns its delight with religious disdain
 To worship its sorrow with darkness for fane.

SCENE 6.—The Court of the Women, in the Temple.

(A marble wall is built upon the west,
In which is set Nicanor's splendid gate
With doors of massive bronze ; and wondrous weight
Of gold and silver ornaments the rest.

Men climb by fifteen steps, and on their breast
They bow the head, and stand in humble state,
Before they lift their eyes to view the great
And holy altar, once by heroes blest.

Above the whitened altar nobly towers
The House of God, of marble, pure and fine ;
The sun beyond ; its rays, with weakened powers,
Upon the golden pinnacles still shine ;
And, in the porch, the grape of gold embowers
A veil whose hues and figures intertwine.)

BARUK, *a priest, to Alexander.*

A weird despair at times will hold possession
Of heart and life, and desolate my soul ;
And thoughts, the sires and children of depression,
League with the mind's impatience of control.

My faith is gone, the spirit wildly yearning
To see my God enthroned above the world,
The passion loathing sensuous love and spurning
All else than spheres where Truth's pure scroll's unfurled.

Those dreams are dead ; and winter-storms succeeding
 The placid strength of summer's smiling seas,
 I view myself in victims, bound and bleeding,
 And curse the God whom savage rites appease.

I looked, but looked in vain, to find some token
 That men inherit immortality,
 To know what laws eternal Right had spoken,
 And gain some proof of God's reality.

The teachers bade me bow my head and hearken
 To fables they had formed from ancient lies :
 They sought to quench within my soul and darken
 The flame which gleamed in passion from mine eyes.

At last, of any certainty despairing,
 Beholding all my search to find it fail,
 My heart, impelled by blind and reckless daring,
 Resolved to pass by stealth within the Veil.

But vain my hope, nor could my step unsaintly
 Arouse the guardian of the sacred shrine ;
 No glory flamed in fire or flickered faintly,
 But darkness such as fills this soul of mine.

I prayed to God for any wild conviction,
 For any mission that a god could give ;
 I cried with tears to spare me this affliction,
 Without an aim, without a hope, to live.

ALEXANDER.

Courage, sir, the future opens brightly ;
 See what splendours gather round the Jewish name ;
 All this Temple's glory must delight thee,
 Built by Herod's favour, crowned with priestly fame.

Now the men of other climes and races
 Read the sacred scrolls and keep the ancient Law,
 Come to pay their vows within these places,
 For of God's great name the heathen stand in awe.

BARUK.

Herod's favour, boast most glorious ;
 Let the sons of Jacob shout for joy ;
 Thus does Esau reign victorious ;
 Why should ancient memories annoy ?

When, as captives, spoiled by strangers,
 Joseph's rebel children left this land,
 By her tomb to view their dangers
 Rachel's mournful ghost was seen to stand.

Clouds again are onward creeping ;
 Now again the heathen laws oppress ;
 Never ghost is heard in weeping ;
 No one deigns to pity our distress.

ALEXANDER.

Yet there is reason for joy,
 Seeing the signs of these days ;
 We shall our voices employ,
 Hailing the Prophet with praise.
 Then shall the sceptre return,
 Wielded by mightier hand ;
 Wrath, without mercy and stern,
 Fall on the foes of the land.

BARUK.

The age of wonders long has ceased ;
 No more with awe inspired,
 No more with ardour fired,
 Men see Immortals at their feast.
 In ruder times it found belief
 That gods and ghosts appeared ;
 And patient hearts were cheered,
 Who thought they came for their relief.
 But now, grown wise, we know too well
 Naught cares for our estate ;
 For, puppets of dead fate,
 We pass to nothingness through hell.

ALEXANDER.

Canst thou thus translate
 All thy love and hate
 Into lifeless fate ?
 Didst thou never know
 Hate like hell below,
 Love's impassioned glow ?

BARUK.

Yes ; I have known emotion, fierce and wild,
 Which whirled me with its torrent force,
 A passionate devotion, undefiled
 By thought that flowed from selfish source.
 A woman looked on me, and from her eyes
 Pure love flashed forth in radiant light,
 And, as a song will wake the world's surprise,
 It broke in morning o'er my night.
 But who could paint the eager longing,
 The secret rapture of the first wild kiss,
 The tumult of the passions thronging
 To taste the sweetness of such matchless bliss ?
 The world grew young ; in mystic fashion
 The voice of earth below and sky above
 Was tremulous with tearful passion
 And sang in loudest strain the song of love.

JUDAS, *to Jesus, as they enter with others.*

Master, how the spirit glows
 In gazing on such scenes as these,
 Where each rite and structure shews
 The power of ancient memories.
 There the tablets still record
 How Judas, named the Hammer, fought
 For the people of the Lord
 With strength and valour passing thought.

BARUK, *to Alexander.*

How strangely sad that face,
 As if the soul within
 Was swayed by some dim dream
 And lighted by a gleam
 Of glories, such as grace
 A victor over sin.

ALEXANDER.

I have often met him here,
 Followed by that peasant throng ;
 They, as held with silent fear ;
 He, as soul-possessed with song.

Like a psalm, at times his speech
 Strikes in music on the ear,
 Rousing souls with tones that reach
 Through the darkness of their fear.

BARUK, *to Simon, a pharisee, who enters.*

Peace be with thee, stranger ; who is he
 Followed by the crowd from Galilee ?

SIMON, *a pharisee.*

A man who left his occupation,
 Assured that he, untaught, could rule
 Our lives with paltry speculation
 Uncountenanced by rabbi's school.

Those creatures of the soil will travel
 For miles to lend him lengthened ears ;
 And, as he talks, his tiresome cavil
 Subverts their faith with foolish tears.

JUDAS, *to Jesus.*

Now occasion waits for thee ;
 A thousand zealots throng the place ;
 Strike for God and liberty,
 Or die a dastard in disgrace.

JESUS.

Shall I, a nobler crown desiring,
 And to a greater throne aspiring,
 Forsake the path that I have trod
 In happy fellowship with God,
 And reign o'er those whom passions lead
 To violence in word and deed ?

JUDAS.

Must thou still drug thy soul with dreams
 In face of all the times demand ;
 Or wilt thou frame a sober scheme
 To form a kingdom in this land ?

JESUS.

Oh, how sweet are the joys of the bosom which knows
 And which glows
 With the vast love of God ; all that love which bestows
 On the throes
 Of the spirit such value that surely appears
 After years,
 In its gladness, the soul which was purged by its fears
 And its tears.

And how sweet are the joys of the bosom which feels
 And reveals
 How the deep love of man so much misery heals,
 And appeals
 To the Father of all that he hasten the day
 When his sway
 Shall extend o'er the world and all wrong pass away
 In decay.

JUDAS.

A man immured in life's cold prison
 Will beat upon the dead stone walls,
 Till o'er his head a light has risen
 And through a narrow opening falls.

Then patiently he leans to hearken
 What message comes from worlds above,
 And thinks no more of walls which darken
 His world of happiness and love.

While we admire his resignation,
 Commend his piety and grace,
 Our teachers prove God's visitation
 Has lightened all the cruel place.

Break, break with me the walls confining
 Our race in gloom and poverty,
 For sure the ray, now feebly shining,
 Will blaze upon the man when free.

JESUS.

By self-control and many pains
 The prophet-soul attains
 The vantage-ground from which it sees
 The battle with disease,

The beauteous bloom of bounteous health,
 The witchery of wealth,
 And all that war of love and hate
 Which works a mortal's fate.

One welcomed blast of selfish breath
 Can darken dreams with death,
 And scorch with fire of foulest flame
 The soul that shrank from shame,
 Bequeathing memory a stench
 With power to quell and quench
 The furnace of such pure desire
 As robes e'en God in fire.

BARUK, *to Alexander.*

Her nervous grace reveals a soul in storm,
 And lends an eloquence to speechless form.
 Her lustrous eyes, in which her spirit shines,
 Are veiled by lashes dark ; in pencilled lines
 Her eye-brows meet ; and round her forehead, low
 But smooth, and white as newly fallen snow,
 She wears a golden band ; and from it droops
 On both her brows the jewel-chain, in loops
 Which link beneath her soft and rounded chin.
 Red lips and pearly teeth seem framed within
 The golden circlet pendent on her face.
 Her raven tresses flow with richest grace
 In rippling streams beneath the veil that, down,
 A silken cloud, floats from her golden crown.
 About her neck the pearl and coral chains
 Depend in rows, and vainly each restrains
 The heaving and the throbbing of her breast,
 Scarce hidden by the white embroidered vest.
 And then her hands, so gentle and so white,
 So small and delicate, are bathed in light
 Which flashes from her rings. Her sleeves made wide
 Display her full-shaped arms, my darling's pride,
 Adorned with bracelets ; but the chains suggest
 The bonds of one imprisoned and distrest.
 And both her ears their veil of jewels wear,
 Like golden grapes in clusters, ripe and rare.
 With great and costly shoulder-clasps confined,

Her purple mantle falls in folds behind.
 Her linen girdle, wrought in fashion chaste,
 Is wound in many folds about her waist,
 And binds the crimson tunic, richly gemmed
 With pearls and jewels and with border hemmed
 In deepest purple ; while the flowing train
 Is trimmed with gold ; and, as she moves, a strain
 Most sweet of laughing, tinkling music tells
 She shakes and wakes her silver ankle-bells.

ALEXANDER.

I have seen the high-priest's daughter,
 But her eyes were clear from care ;
 Bright with smiles, none would have thought her
 Maid in passionate despair.

BARUK.

There's a sorrow that sleeps in the smiling
 Of faces that feign
 To be gladdened and gleesome, beguiling
 With patience their pain.

There's a sadness that sobs in the speeches
 Of spirits that smart,
 And its rhythm and rhetoric reaches
 The heart of the heart.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS, *entering with others.*

As councillors, we make demand
 Who gave to thee a rab's commission ;
 Art thou the prophet of the land ;
 Or one who dares to sow sedition ?

JESUS.

When John baptised,
 Who authorised
 The course he ran :
 Did God or man ?

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS, *to his companions.*

We cannot say that John the Baptist had
 His power from God, for we supposed him mad.

ALEXANDER.

Nor can we say, Of men, lest they be stirred
To wrath, who heard and hearkened to his word.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

No one knows.

JESUS.

And neither will I seek
To disclose
Who bestows
On me the power to speak.

JESUS, *seating himself on the steps.*

Behold a lord, whom wealth and power incline
To hedge a field and plant a chosen vine ;
He builds a tower and vat to press the wine.

He hires some tillers, men who understand
The culture of the grape, and to their hand
Commits the field ; and seeks a distant land.

And, afterwards, he sends a slave to say
That they must give the fruits without delay :
They answer him with blows, nor will obey.

The lord is wroth, and sends another slave ;
And he, dishonoured, scarce his life can save :
A third they kill, nor grant him e'en a grave.

The lord affirms, No messengers remain,
Except my well-loved son ; but he'll obtain
Like reverence with myself, nor go in vain.

And, seeing him, the murderous tillers say,
It is the heir ; the field becomes our prey
When he is dead : they cast him forth and slay.

The lord returns, the sword of wrath to bear
Against the rebels: none of them he'll spare,
But give the vineyard into others' care.

For have ye never e'en this scripture read :
The stone refused becomes the corner's head ?
So God appoints, and we are filled with dread.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

Are we the murderous tillers, prophet-slaying,
Whom God condemns because we have displeased him ?

SIMON, *a pharisee*.

But leave him now, his punishment delaying ;
The pilgrims would be angered if we seized him.

ALEXANDER.

Then, of himself, he quotes the psalmist's saying
Concerning Israël who serves in pain :
He also claims Messiah's throne, arraying
Himself as Judah's son who comes to reign.

SIMON, *a pharisee*.

No puny throne suffices his ambition ;
To rule this land would rouse his deep disdain,
For God the Lord has given him a mission
To drag all kings and Cæsars in his train.
Approach and question : he has no suspicion.

ALEXANDER.

We know that thou art true, and teachest true ;
That fearless thou dost view our sad condition :
Dost thou regard the tax as Cæsar's due ?

JESUS.

Why do ye set a snare for me ?
But bring a coin that I may tell.
Now whose the face that here we see ;
And whose the name these letters spell ?

ALEXANDER.

The name and face are Cæsar's, as they say,
And his alone.

JESUS.

The due of Cæsar unto Cæsar pay,
To God his own.

JESUS, *to John*.

Come, my lad, repeat the verses
Which king David sang of old,
Words in which the king rehearses
What the future times unfold.

JOHN.

Eternal God has clearly spoken
 Unto my lord who reigns as king :
 Behold thy foes, their forces broken,
 Their tribute unto thee shall bring ;
 And, round thy throne, the people, thronging,
 Are robed as on a festive day,
 While youthful breasts are filled with longing
 To follow thee in war-array.

And thine shall be the priestly glory
 Of him who ruled within this place ;
 For, like that king of ancient story,
 Thou art a priest of endless race.
 Behold, at length, in rage awaking,
 The sceptred Lord of Sabaoth ;
 And all the thrones, in terror shaking,
 Shall plight to thee their trembling troth.

JESUS.

How say ye, scribes, that God's Anointed
 From David's royal line shall spring,
 The psalmist's child is he appointed
 To reign on David's throne as king ;
 For, as he spoke, the lad was telling
 How David wrote of God's award
 Which crowns a greater king, compelling
 The world to yield to David's lord ?

SIMON, *a pharisee*.

Dost thou mock us ? Then beware
 Of the fate which we'll prepare
 For thee, that thy name may be
 Term of scorn and infamy ;
 Till the sound is only heard
 As a shameful, whispered word.
 Vilest memories shall cling
 Round thee as a loathsome thing,
 As an idle, worthless knave,
 Buried in a borrowed grave.

JESUS, *rising*.

Avoid such men as those ; the scribe, who wears
A woman's robes which trail upon the ground,
And, strutting like some noble damsel, stares
With conscious pride on humbler men around,
And grins when any passer-by prepares
To meet his glance with reverence profound.

Beware the pharisee, who binds the law
In parchment case upon his brow and hand,
Who found his joy when lowly mortals saw
Him, at the corner of the market, stand
With hands uplifted, while his leathern jaw
Proclaimed to God his pleasure and command.

With solemn face and robber-hands they seize
The widow's house, her children's bread, and sell
Their ill-got prey ; and, like some fell disease,
They live upon their victims' loss, and swell
With others' food : there wait for such as these
A sterner judgment and a fiercer hell.

SCENE 7.—The House of Joseph, called Caiaphas, the High-Priest.

(THE guest-room lamps flame overhead
And throw their light on carpets, spread
To furnish forth a proud display,
And couches set in due array.
But, through the pillars which support
The cloister-roofs, appears the court
Illumined by the full-orbed moon ;
And from the porch the slave-girl's croon
Swells on the world with wistful tones,
Like shattered waves on shaken stones.)

LEAH, *singing*.

The stillness of the starry night
Will lull those fevered thoughts to slumber,
Which blazing noon bequeathes to blight
The stillness of the starry night ;
And when they palsy us with fright,
Or throng like spectres none may number,
The stillness of the starry night
Will lull those fevered thoughts to slumber.

HANNAH, *entering*.

I cannot rest ; there is some evil brewing,
And ills, unknown, have filled me with alarm.
Is Baruk safe ? I wonder what he's doing.
It cannot be that he is come to harm.

Why, Leah, are the lamps still burning,
And all the house ablaze with light ?

LEAH.

Thy father, lady, is returning
To hold a council here to-night.

BARUK, *entering*.

Hannah !

HANNAH.

Baruk !

BARUK.

Soul of my soul, now fare you well :
My hopes are gone, and darkness grows around me ;
Broken and shattered is the spell
Which, until now, in loving fetters bound me.

HANNAH.

'Tis not pride that slays the maiden
Whom her lover has forsaken ;
She is not with sorrow laden,
Nor with trembling anger shaken.
But her love, again returning
To her bosom, is increasing ;
And the growing flame is burning,
Burning ever, never ceasing.
For the flame, in fierceness growing,
Leaves its home, a victim needing ;
If it fails, returns, still glowing ;
Henceforth on its own heart feeding.

LEAH.

Lady, beware lest thy father surprise thee.
I'll go and watch for his step at the gate.

HANNAH.

Go then, my Leah. And must I despise thee,
Changing my love into bitterest hate ?

BARUK.

No ; but my path has grown so dark,
My strength and courage waver ;
For every human dog may bark
At him who's out of favour.

I dare not shrine thy life in mine
 For which my fate is calling ;
 Nor should the vine delight to twine
 Around the oak in falling.

HANNAH.

If I could find thee the words which betoken
 Affection impassioned and panting in pain,
 Then would my heart, in the hour it is broken,
 Compose thee its love-song and die in the strain.

Why I must love thee I make no inquiry,
 For mine is the reasonless love of a maid,
 Love which is kindled in passion so fiery
 That heaven and happiness wither and fade.

Should'st thou deceive me, prove faithless and cruel,
 And be but an idol that curses its shrine,
 Then I will make my affection the fuel
 And offer my life on the altar of thine.

BARUK.

Farewell, the chill of baffled hope is stealing
 Over my heart, and palsies hand and brain ;
 And that wild dream, which shone as if revealing
 The countless joys that crowd in Passion's train,
 Now mocks my soul, no longer e'en concealing
 How hopeless all it called me to attain ;
 While, lost in dull amazement, Thought and Feeling
 Decline, decay and pass away in pain.

HANNAH.

Not youth cut off by sudden death,
 Or life in last retreat,
 Can match a love-lorn maiden's breath
 In pathos of defeat.

BARUK.

The halo of youth, which delighted
 And circled the brow of the day,
 Has passed from my life, which is blighted,
 For ever away.

Another, more happy, shall guide you
 To visions of virtue and truth,
 And sing, as he marches beside you,
 The war-song of youth.

HANNAH.

The wave of the ocean, in dying
 In song on the stones of the beach,
 Has never a music out-ying
 The tones of your speech.

BARUK.

The wind-wakened wave of the rivers,
 Which shivers in stress and surprise,
 Is liker my spirit, which quivers,
 Delivers a murmur and dies.

HANNAH.

But I love thee. Dost thou doubt me ?
 Never question love like mine :
 Light of heaven flames about me
 When my hand is clasped in thine.

I'll forget my maiden blushes,
 And confess my love to thee,
 Though some ancient maxim hushes
 Words which flow too fast and free.

Should my heart, in silence breaking,
 Hide its love nor dare to speak
 Till, bereaved and lonely, waking
 To a life, forlorn and bleak ?

BARUK.

Will of the world, who makest man's endeavour
 Seem but the strife of shadows with the sun,
 Why must we toil from birth to death, but never
 Reign o'er the realm our work of war has won ?

All of our life is spent and lost in gaining
 Truths that the distance decks with morning rays :
 Lo, as we grasp them, they're already waning,
 Pallid as clouds on skies of chrysoprase.

Look on the waters when the light is flinging
 Flowerets of flame and leaves of ruddy gold ;
 Wondrous the world of beauty there outspringing ;
 Touch it and see ! The stream is dark and cold.

Sunset is throned on pearl and lilac splendours
 Set in the stillness of an azure flood ;
 Yet, as we look, the faithless glow surrenders
 Exquisite beauties in a blaze of blood.

HANNAH.

On every breeze a whispered word is flying,
 On every stream is written by the sun ;
 Its name is woven in the splendours dyeing
 The tapestries of cloud and azure spun.

It cries athwart the crashing of the thunder,
 Descending with the lightning's flaming bolt ;
 Screams in the rage that rends the skies asunder
 Till Earth and Heaven fever in revolt.

In noontide's heat it lies in letters brazen
 Upon the fiery sun's imperial plumes,
 But flies to tread this lowly world and blazon
 The rhododendron's pallid purple blooms.

In every heart its murmurs are repeated,
 In waking eyes it trembles as a mist,
 Purgings the life of passions which defeated
 Sorrow, divine and vaunted exorcist.

It robes with flame the restless dreamer living
 To spurn submission and to strive with wrong,
 And makes a mortal more than mortal, giving
 The love in music with the light in song.

Its sultry beams glare on the stern ascetic,
 And yet its radiance soothes the lover's soul,
 Arraying each, as stars are energetic
 To wreath the night with fading aureole.

Thou didst unfold it, mighty Maccabean,
 Crowned for the boon with battle's hurricane ;
 But petty factions shout thy chant as pæan,
 And in their strife the word is lost again.

As men regard the runes of vanished races,
 We glance upon the hieroglyph unawed.
 One moment ! Now my spirit's free and traces
 The hidden meaning. Can the word be " God " ?

LEAH, *singing*.

But noon, transfigured in a dream
 Born of the haze in moonlit glances,
 Bewitches men till passions seem
 But noon transfigured in a dream ;
 And mystified by fancy's gleam,
 They trace no truth in nightly trances,
 But noon, transfigured in a dream
 Born of the haze in moonlit glances.

BARUK.

This gasp, this stare, what do they mean ?
 Then look upon these hands, and see ;
 Grasping the void which lies between
 The prize that drew my life and me.

I fall, as one who sees the goal
 Scarcely elude his fingers' touch :
 I faint, for that which thrall'd my soul
 Has only just escaped my clutch.

The fancies which transformed the earth
 And lit my dreams with lustrous light
 Perished, as suddenly as dearth
 Of hope created hell and night.

Is there no other back to bear
 The blame that crowns my ill-success ;
 No means to soothe my own despair
 By taunting God with faithlessness ?

And have I struggled all my days,
 Stumbled and fallen, risen, fought
 So many times and scorned dispraise,
 To fail at last, attaining naught ?

Could I but stand before God's throne

To speak my heart out to his face

And say to him, " Must I alone

" Desire the good and gain disgrace ?

" Others have won both wealth and fame ;

" Others have lived in laughing ease ;

" Mine is the broken-hearted shame

" That Nature's smiles can ne'er appease.

" My fever grows : I would be calm

" And reason with thee, but my heart

" Chants as an undersong this psalm,

" Turgid and destitute of art :

" In darkness thou art ever near,

" Although my senses can't perceive

" Thy ways or works, and doubting fear

" Flies from the love to which I cleave.

" The clouds have veiled the vault of stars,

" And coldness brings a frozen rest,

" But still thy hands with burning scars

" Are laid upon my brow and breast.

" Thou dost not need my praise or prayer ;

" I do not need thy praise or prize ;

" All that we need is everywhere,

" The living love that satisfies."

The sun shall smile upon the grass,

And play upon the pleasant streams

With joy whose radiancies surpass

The visioned splendours of my dreams.

The seed shall fall upon the soil,

And, in the shattering of its shell,

Waken to win by happy toil

A fairer form than asphodel.


My heart was broken : now I know

The motive which inspired the deed,

For only thus my life could grow

To manhood from the prisoned seed.

HANNAH.



Despair had found thee lonely
And fixed her livid stare,
Till every thought was only
Despair.

For life seemed sad and lengthy,
With whispers growing rife
That death's the sole nepenthe
For life.

But light dissolves the subtle
And steel-grey web that night
Enweaves with every shuttle
But light

As youth is ever surgent
And fired with new-born truth,
So truth is yours and urgent
As youth.

With hope a heart invigoured
Finds in defeat but scope
For energies transfigured
With hope.

For love, the laughing tyrant
In dreams of worlds above,
Suspires in each aspirant
For love.

And fame, now false and sterile,
Shall welcome with acclaim
The man who mocked at peril
And fame.

BARUK.

Through life's burnt soil my troubled fancy traces
The footmarks left by lovers long ago ;
And in the tracks my spirit learns to know
What storms and sun-bursts passioned in these places.

For see where time already half effaces
Divergent paths and footfalls, sad and slow ;
But yonder marks retain the morning glow
Of mingled spirits lightening desert spaces.

If through the mist suspended o'er these wastes,
 Imagination should divine fruition
 Of dreams in which my lonely pathway hastes
 To merge in yours, would you in anger ban
 The hopeful heart which found its full ambition
 In weakly woman linked to frailer man ?

HANNAH.

As a man in the praise of his brother,
 A poet in passionate song,
 And a babe in the smile of its mother
 Is joyous and strong ;

So the glance of a maid on her lover
 Endows with renewal of life,
 And his spirit awakes to recover
 Its strength for its strife ;

For the love which is strong to transfigure
 The form and the features of death
 Can inspire with a holier vigour
 And fierier breath.

BARUK.

The night, which streams o'er yonder skies,
 Brings no alarm,
 If light, which dreams upon your eyes,
 Bestow its charm
 On heart in shrouds of woe and scorn
 And folds of earth,
 Disparting clouds to shew the morn
 In golden birth.

HANNAH.

When you declared you loved me more than life,
 And I believed the tale so sweetly told,
 I dreamed of days when I, a happy wife,
 Might tell my love through lips grown fondly bold.

But now my bosom will not be controlled,
 Though it was hushed to peace nor thought of strife
 When you declared you loved me more than life,
 And I believed the tale so sweetly told.

For thus you come again and bring a knife
 To cleave the hope which wraps me in its fold,
 Until that future seem with sorrows rife,
 Which shone in light and blazed with gleaming gold
 When you declared you loved me more than life,
 And I believed the tale so sweetly told.

BARUK.

The dawn in its beauty, englassing
 Its grace in the face of the sea,
 Has never a beauty surpassing
 Your smiling for me.

The breeze, in its breathing the brightest
 Of songs on its harp of a tree,
 Has never a tone like your lightest
 Of whispers for me.

And life, though it glow with tradition
 And sparkle with splendours to be,
 Can never possess such a vision
 Of glory for me.

HANNAH.

The sun-beams and moon-gleams may dwindle
 And star-glitter tremble and flee,
 But still will the fire which you kindle
 Be heaven for me.

BARUK.

My despair seems as yet undiminished ;
 Its shadow will darken your days,
 And will render our life-work unfinished,
 Unworthy of praise.

All the laughter of life will be lacking
 In strength for dispelling the smart,
 When the dread of defeat will be racking
 My head and your heart.

HANNAH.

When Hope has grown dark as the beryl,
 And Fancy has paled to the lips,
 When Reason is barren and sterile
 And veiled in eclipse,

Thy strength shall prove stronger than iron
 To strive and to wrestle with wrong,
 For mine is the power to environ
 Thy soul with a song.

BARUK.

In the depth of the silence and darkness afar
 There's unchangeable grouping of star upon star ;
 And though meteors flash and the night-winds be shrill,
 Though the surges of ocean in night-tempest thrill,
 Yet the fears they awaken are lulled into rest
 By the peace of the stars on the firmament's breast ;
 So the darkness of life has no terrors for me
 While the star-group of hope and affection shall be.

HANNAH.

There's a splendour which shines in the shimmer
 Of stars on a stream,
 Which assumes to the sight of a swimmer
 The dimness of dream,
 Like the glory of God ; and the glimmer
 Of gold in the gleam
 Still entrances his glances, while dimmer
 The shore-meadows seem.

So the faintest of flamelets is flashing
 On foam of the tide
 Where the billows of being are dashing
 The swimmers aside,
 While we look at the light which no splashing
 Or darkness can hide ;
 And we'll strive, spite of weeping and gnashing
 Of teeth, in our pride.

LEAH.

Thy father, lady, comes this way.
 Oh, sir, begone without delay.

HANNAH.

I'll send thee word, if thou wilt wait
 At dawn outside the Northern gate.

BARUK.

Farewell ; my world bewails its loss of light.

HANNAH.

Farewell ; my heart must hunger through the night.

LEAH.

Oh, what will happen should he find you here ?

My lady, fly : I tremble, filled with fear.

(They go out in opposite directions.)

LEAH, *singing*.

The night has children of its own

In ruthless hate and reckless passion ;

And though the noon may hush its groan,

The night has children of its own

To wreck its solemn monotone ;

For, freed from frenzy noon-tides fashion,

The night has children of its own

In ruthless hate and reckless passion.

JOSEPH, THE HIGH-PRIEST, *entering with Alexander*.

What man was he now passing out ?

LEAH.

A priest who sought your lordship here.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

The matter he had come about ?

LEAH.

It was intended for your ear.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

Yes ; Alexander, one of those

Whom you, in your discretion, chose

To aid us execute our plan.

ALEXANDER.

Good sir, I saw the way he ran ;

And it was Baruk I would swear.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

What? Always Baruk. May I share
 What waits for him, if I shall still
 Refrain while he withstands my will!

ALEXANDER.

Your lady's father.

ANNAS, *entering with Joseph.*

Strike the blow
 Whose force shall cause all men to know
 That we, the rulers, take no share
 In plots which zeal and fraud prepare.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

I fear we choose an evil day;
 For while the crowds of pilgrims stay
 To hold the Feast, a small event
 May rouse their sleeping discontent.

ALEXANDER.

When priests and statesmen bless a cause,
 The people hail it with applause;
 So bend this Pilate to our side,
 And patriots then must run and hide.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

And yet no patriot does he seem to be;
 He cursed the pharisees and all their school.

ANNAS.

Like them he dreams of Jewish realms set free
 From foreign tyrannies and Roman rule.

ALEXANDER.

He was no pharisee; nor yet, like you,
 Would serve the time that we might still be sure
 Of Rome's caress; nor would he e'er pursue
 The plans of Herod. He is of the Poor.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

And what could Herod's policy succeed
 In gaining for the state except the end
 Of ancient laws? While Grecian rules would breed
 A host of ills.

ALEXANDER.

And you, you still pretend
To seek our good, to lull the crowd, nor wake
The Romans' wrath. Do you not undertake
A task beyond your power?

ANNAS.

These are not times
For factions in our midst, for now we call
The friends of law to rise and crush the crimes
And leaders of the Poor who threaten all.

JOSEPH.

Is it nothing to you that the people must strive
With the forces of nature that you may survive?
For the toilers are living the lives of the brutes
And perish, while you are enjoying the fruits.

Is it nothing to you that the labourer dies
And the children are swarming like swine in their sties,
While your mansions are built by the toil and the tears
Of the poor you repay with your smiles and your sneers?

ANNAS.

What words are those? Art thou too of the Poor?

ALEXANDER.

Poor wretch. He's crazed and mad, 'tis very sure.

ANNAS.

Our friends assemble.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

They are welcome here.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS, *entering*.

Look, Jesus and the crowd are drawing near.

JOSEPH.

But, sirs, let us be careful what we do,
Lest we should, in our calmer moments, rue
A hasty act. There is no doubt the land
Is much disturbed; but then this helpless band

Of peasants is a very feeble sign
 Of stronger, deeper plots which undermine
 The social fabric ; so 'tis scarcely wise
 To crush the weak and nurse the secret foe.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

This Jesus trades in fables and in lies :
 His piety is but a market-show.

JOSEPH.

Nay ; keep those terms to style thy friends. I heard
 This Galilean speak such words as stirred
 Those depths within the heart, which never feel
 The unavailing rage of party-zeal ;
 And from his lips would flow, with heat intense,
 The lava-streams of fiery eloquence,
 Which buried fear and falsehood in a tomb,
 But furnished soil where truth and hope may bloom.

ANNAS.

That very power of speech makes him the more
 The mouth-piece of the rebels who deplore
 Our fallen state.

JOSEPH.

Good sir, there is some cause
 Since we must feel the curse of heathen laws.

ANNAS.

No doubt, the heathen strangers' reign
 Insults our God and Holy Place ;
 But what can restless schemers gain
 Except the ruin of the race ?

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

The Romans, roused to wrath, descry
 The hopes by which this sect is buoyed.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

Then better this one man should die
 Than all the nation be destroyed.

ALL, *as Jesus enters with the Crowd.*

He comes, the blasphemer,
The heathen, the dreamer,
The scorner of sages,
Rejecting what ages
Hand down by tradition.
He boasts a commission
From God, and with lying
Insults the Undying.

JOSEPH.

Hear me a moment. Consider the work ye engage in, the
aim ye pursue ;
Lest, in a time that is coming, your sons and your
daughters, afflicted, shall rue
Woes which shall spring from this night ; and perchance,
for who knows all the future ? they'll see
In the defeat of this Jesus, the fall of the people he taught
to be free.

Still at the gates of the future the spirit of mortals is
busily beating,
Beats while it waits for the flinging apart of the portals
and vision of peace,
Filling, meanwhile, and renewing its heart with its hope,
and preparing a greeting,
Greeting of mortals immortal who long for a kingdom that
never shall cease.

While they are waiting, and craving, and seeking a
freedom from evil and sorrow,
Blighting the brain and the heart of them, clings the
inherited sin of the ages,
Smiling its hate, and enslaving the weakness which flees
from its reason to borrow
Light that has waned and departed, and brings from their
merited rest the dead sages.

Still are the Past and the Present, with sins which were
born at the birth or created
By the delusions and errors of living, defiling the purest
endeavour,

Chilling and blasting the pleasant and winsome adornments
 of earth-dreams which waited
 End of confusions and terrors while giving a smile that
 endureth for ever.
 Shall we not honour the man who would call us to see in
 the Future a splendour
 Such as the Past and the Present, though filled with their
 wealth, are unable to render?
 Shall we not honour the man who can paint with a glory
 the darkness which shrouds
 All of our lives, their beginning and end, in a vesture of
 sorrowful clouds?

ALEXANDER.

The beams of hope will tinge with golden glow
 And paint with sunny hues the clouds which throw
 Their shadows on our minds, until they wear
 A drapery of splendid, witching grace ;
 But yet those clouds enveil the azure space
 Which lies far off, in peace serenely fair.
 Then let this dreamer die as one who fed
 The people with false hopes, and in the stead
 Of truth, the stern and sober face of truth,
 Would have us love the dreams of idle youth.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

I do not understand these men. 'Tis time
 To crush this sinner and erase his crime.

ANNAS.

Come, seat yourselves, my friends ; we'll soon dispose
 Of this, our work. Now let the man, who knows
 This fellow's doings, come and in due course
 Relate the same.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

He said that he would force
 The Jews to pay a tribute to our foes,
 The Romans. Further, he declared that we
 Should pay the tax.

ALEXANDER.

Not so ; he said he'd free
The Jews from Rome ; and I have heard him say
That he would claim the Jewish throne and slay
The men who would not own him as their lord.

LEAH, *in the courtyard, to Simon.*

Didst thou not follow Jesus ? Oh, thou hast forgot
Thou wast of those who trusted him.

SIMON, *the Rock.*

No ; I was not.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

Then answer thou, of God and man abhorred,
What didst thou teach ? And who were those who sought
Thy words ?

JESUS.

I spoke to all the world, and taught
In synagogue and Temple, where the Jews
Assemble always. I have never wrought
In secret. These can tell, if they will choose,
What words I spoke, and what the hope I brought.

ALEXANDER, *striking him.*

Dost thou so answer God's High-priest ?

JESUS.

If I spoke evil in the least,
Then testify. If well, then know
It was not thine to smite me.

ALEXANDER.

Oh !

Come, who were those who followed thee ?
Thou villain, why dost thou delay ?

LEAH, *in the courtyard, to Simon.*

Thou wast with him of Galilee.

SIMON, *the Rock.*

I understand not what you say.

ALEXANDER.

I heard him boast that he should reign
 O'er realms whose glories never wane,
 And, with a power none e'er possessed,
 He'd give the earth an age of rest.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

'Tis true. 'Tis true ; and I have heard him say
 He'll pull the Temple down to build again.

ALEXANDER.

Not so, my friend. He said that he would lay
 The Temple in the dust and raise a fane
 Without the aid of hands, for he possessed
 The power of God to make or to consume.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

Dost answer nothing ? What do these attest ?

ALEXANDER.

No word. He sees the justice of his doom.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

Hear ; I adjure thee by the living God
 That thou declare to us if thou art he
 Whom God, whose majesty we praise and laud,
 Anointed king of worlds that are to be.

JESUS.

I am ; and ye shall see the Son of Man
 Enthroned in power and coming in the skies
 To reign and quench the flame which passions fan,
 To kindle fire of love which never dies.

THE HIGH-PRIEST, *standing and rending his robes.*

What need we further witness ? Ye have heard
 His utterance and God-reviling word.
 What think ye ?

ALL, *standing and rending their robes.*

He is guilty. Let him die.

ALEXANDER, *flinging his coat over Jesus' head.*

Who smote thee, God's anointed? Prophecy.

LEAH, *in the courtyard, pointing to Simon.*

He was a member of the band.

SIMON, *the Rock.*

I understand not what you say.

BOAZ, *a labourer.*

Yes. Yes; 'tis true. I saw thee stand
With others by him in the fray.

SIMON, *the Rock.*

I do not know the man of whom ye speak.

BOAZ.

Thou art a Galilean; as thy speech
Would prove.

SIMON, *the Rock.*

May God do so to me, and wreak
Like woes on me, if I have heard him teach,
Or followed him, or know the man at all.

ALEXANDER, *to the Priests.*

Now, let's away to Pilate's judgment-hall.

ANNAS.

'Tis cock-crow now. We needs must wait till day
Shall break; so bid our officers to stay
Till dawn; then we'll arraign him at the seat
Of judgment, and our work shall be complete.

JUDAS, *entering.*

The man is guiltless; take your dross accursed,
And with it take my curses, strong and deep:
My soul, in floods of wild remorse immersed,
Perceives eternal darkness o'er me creep.
If God could hear, I'd weary him with cries
To blast you with the vengeance of the skies.

ANNAS.

We do not care.
'Tis thine affair.

JUDAS.

Ah, God ; the curse from Heaven falls and blights
My life, my soul, my hope in God's Anointed ;
And wrath, far worse than Hell, appals and lights
With lurid flames the woes for me appointed.

The Vale of Hinnom, where the worm and fire
For ever live and taint the gloomy air,
Is Paradise to what my dreams conspire
To paint the world, a mirror of despair.

ALEXANDER.

While the world, in careless gladness,
Smiled upon his daring madness,
Thou didst follow Jesus in the way.
Now the world, no longer smiling,
Round him rages, throngs, reviling,
Thou for wages dost the man betray.

JUDAS.

The days of my youth were absorbed in a vision :
I dreamed that I saw, through the veiling of time,
The isles to the Lord render willing submission,
And Judah's proud sceptre in splendour sublime.

And Jesus, I thought, would have led us to glory,
Accustomed to sway simple hearts by a word,
And able to win by a commonplace story
The love of the crowd who adored as they heard.

I saw with delight he possessed an attraction
For those whose wild spirits all dangers would brave ;
Till, wroth with his schemes and his dreaming inaction,
I sold him to you for the price of a slave.

And now, from my life has departed for ever
The dream of my youth which had led me astray,
And with it the flame and the fire of endeavour
For ever, for ever, have vanished away.

I fear not the torture wherein I am fated
For ever, for ever, for ever, to dwell :
Already my soul in itself has created
The hell of remorse, the most horrible hell.

I go from the world which disowns me, bequeathing
The tale of a crime and the wreck of a name :
Already I see how its hatred is wreathing
My brow with a halo of infamous shame.

I go ; for my heart is benumbed with its terror ;
My soul is consumed with the horrible dread
Of meeting him, slain by my crime and your error,
Whenever I pass to the world of the dead.

SCENE 8.—Before the Tower of Anthony.

(AGAINST the northern sky stands forth the tower
With massive battlements and strong grey walls ;
In front, the stone-built platform bids the thralls
Of Rome to think upon their judge, and cower.

Upon the right, the pale and growing power
Of Dawn is opening wide the glorious halls
Of Day, whose light in lavish splendour falls
On life renewed in trembling heart and flower.

The steps of ruddy Dawn in slowness creep
Across the pearly haze, while Morning strews
Its path with radiance, spread as crimson deep
And rosy gold with pale and azure blues
To where the West, which lies in sluggard sleep,
Reflects with pallid smiles those varied hues.)

TITUS, *a soldier, to Cornelius.*

There is some Jewish plot in hand
This night, for I have seen a band
With torches cross the town. I know
That, at this feast, their passions grow
Beyond control of tongue or hand.

CORNELIUS, *a centurion.*

Excited feelings mark this land.

TITUS.

And yet the crowds in Rome can rage as they.

CORNELIUS.

'Tis true ; yet Roman wrath will pass away
 Before some timely gift ; but these men die
 To save their god from wrong.

TITUS.

They cheat and lie
 Enough to save the gods of all the world ;
 But it were well if Jews and gods were hurled
 To hell for then these civil broils would cease.

CORNELIUS.

Not ease and pleasant peace
 Can nurse the human heart,
 Or give to men release
 From sorrow and its smart.

The heroes of the earth
 Are those who waken strife
 In which we see the birth
 Of higher, nobler life.

But he who strives to break
 The chains which curb our minds
 Will see his work awake
 The wrath of slaves and hinds.

And cowards stand to gaze,
 Who in their heart admire
 The cruelty which slays
 The hero's heart of fire.

Perhaps the Jewish soul
 Which scorns its slavery
 Shall lead us to the goal
 Of noblest bravery.

TITUS.

Your heroes, by your gods, are coming here :
 The noise grows louder.

CORNELIUS.

Let the guard appear.
 The sight of them will check the crowd, should they
 Attempt a riot. Make a great display.

THE CROWD, *entering with Jesus.*

Away with him ! The cross ! The cross, I say !
Let him be crucified ! Away ! Away !

CORNELIUS.

Keep silence there. What do ye seek
In coming here ? Now you, sir, speak.

THE CROWD.

Away with him, the rogue ; and let him die !
Away, and crucify him ! Crucify !

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

We bring this man to Pilate, charged with sin
Against the State.

CORNELIUS.

I'll take the man within.
But, Titus, hearken ; keep a watch the while ;
And should the crowd adventure force or guile,
Disperse them suddenly, and spare them not.

BOAZ.

The soldiers talk. Beware. A plot ! A plot !
Remember Pilate's murder of the men
Before his judgment-seat. Be careful then,
Or they will murder us. These, soldiers ? Nay,
But cowards, rogues, assassins. Don't delay
To set on us. Centurion, move on ; faster ;
And take this villain to your villain master.

(Three blasts of silver trumpets in the Temple hard by.)

THE LEVITES, *singing in the Temple.*

The Lord, our God, ascends his throne ;
For he shall reign and he alone.

He wears a vesture, pure and bright ;
And girds himself with power and might.

The land stands firm from shore to shore ;
Nor shakes again for evermore.

Thy throne has stood from olden days ;
And ancient times unfold thy praise.

(Three blasts on the trumpets.)

THE CROWD, *to Pilate, as he enters.*

Away with the liar who seeks to remove
The customs and laws which the fathers approve.

THE PRIESTS.

He claims to be king of the Jews, and of late
Renewed the disorder which threatened the State.

PILATE.

Then take him hence, and judge him by your law.

ANNAS.

Your law forbids us put a man to death.

THE PRIESTS, *to Pilate, as he goes in.*

Let him be crucified. We never saw
A wretch who less deserved to draw a breath.

THE CROWD.

Away with him ! The cross ; for he must die !
Away, and crucify him ! Crucify !

THE LEVITES, *singing in the Temple.*

The streams, O Lord, lift up their rebel waves :
The raging flood in madness roars and raves.

But thou art stronger than the breakers' roar :
Then bid the furious waves to rage no more.

(Three blasts on the trumpets.)

JOHN, *singing as he enters.*

I am the World-child,
Nursed by the sunshine,
Cradled in visions,
Robed in the splendours
Flung by the storm-winds,
Feeling the heart-beats,
Throbbings and birth-throes,
Pangs of my Mother.

BOAZ.

Here the mad poet comes. We'll place him there
As judge, upon the Roman's judgment-chair.

(*As they seize him, he stands as in a dream, and pointing to
the sky, speaks.*)

JOHN.

Dark and Dawn would wed the World
Waking from her winter sleep,
And the Dark has almost hurled
Dawn within the dateless deep.

Pallid palls, which hoary Faith
Wove to hide her feeble arms,
Deck the Dark, and vanquish scathe
By the power of ancient charms.

Living lies and dead truths meet
On his brows, and twine, and kiss ;
While beneath his miry feet
Yawns the gloom of Death's abyss.

Indistinctness weaves a shroud
For the Dawn, and veils his form
Trembling like a summer-cloud
In the passing of a storm.

BOAZ.

Now, fool, what else hast thou to tell to-day ?

JOHN.

Nay ; come, attend to what my lark will say.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS.

Be quiet, fool.

ALEXANDER.

We've had enough. Now cease.

BOAZ.

Nay, fool, go on. He'll keep the crowd in peace.

JOHN, *to his lark.*

Come, dear heart, forgive their scorning ;
Sing once more for me this morning ;
Then I'll set thee free.
Silence ; stand in quiet round me

Let no riot now confound me,
 While it speaks to me.
 In early spring
 I love to sing
 Of earth and its robe of flowers,
 Of lilies, bright
 In morning light,
 And blossoms on myrtle bowers.
 I wing my flight
 Till, out of sight,
 My song is the voice of the sky ;
 But make my nest
 On earth's sad breast
 To suffer with mortals who sigh.
 And minds in grief
 Will find relief,
 For he, who will listen, still hears
 The notes of song,
 Both sweet and strong,
 Till eye-stars will glisten with tears.
 I cheer the sad,
 And soothe the mad,
 And waken the bad to noble strife ;
 So set me free,
 And I shall be
 The herald of high and holy life.

TITUS.

Be off, thou fool, or I will seize thee.

JOHN.

But spare my lark ; it sings to please thee.

THE CROWD, *to Pilate entering with Jesus.*

Away with him, and let his life and name
 Be never mentioned save as sign of shame.

THE LEVITES, *singing in the Temple.*

Thy word and work shall stand, established, fixed and sure ;
 And holy beauty crowns thy House, while days endure.

(*Three blasts on the trumpets.*)

PILATE.

I find no fault in him.

ANNAS.

He is a vile
And evil-tongued deceiver. By his guile
He seeks to stir the people to rebel ;
And now their rage is roused and bosoms swell.
He wanders through the land, and we can trace
His path from rebel districts to this place
By plots and murmurings and open threats,
For these are all his rebel speech begets.
He claims to be a king, and dares malign
Great Cæsar's honour and our sacred shrine.

PILATE.

Dost thou not hear how many charges lie
Against thee ?

THE CROWD.

Crucify him ; let him die !
Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

PILATE, *to Cornelius.*

Quick ! bring Barabbas here to me.

(To the people.)

Ye brought
This man as one who wrought some crime and sought
To work deception and your nation's fall ;
But see, I find in him no fault at all.

THE CROWD.

The cross ! The cross ! Away ; and let him die !
Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

That wretch Barabbas comes. It is a choice.
Our friends must shout " Barabbas " with one voice.

PILATE.

Which of the two shall I free for you, choose
Either this rebel or him ye accuse.

THE CROWD.

Barabbas ! Barabbas !

PILATE.

Then what will ye choose
For him whom ye titled the King of the Jews.

THE CROWD.

The cross ! The cross ! Away ; and let him die !
Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

PILATE.

But why ? what evil has he wrought ?
Or what sedition has he taught ?

THE CROWD.

The cross ! The cross ! Away ; and let him die !
Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

PILATE, *to Cornelius.*

Release that scoundrel. Take that man within,
And scourge him.

THE PRIESTS.

Hasten, Pilate ; quick ; begin
The work of God, and cause this fellow feel
What neither God nor man will help to heal.

BOAZ.

Be quick, thou butcher, Pilate ; quickly go,
And send him to the place which soon shall know
Both thee and him ; for, in the depths of hell,
Thy tyrant soul and he shall ever dwell.

ANNAS, *to the High-priest.*

They've gone within. 'Tis well. This day shall free
The State from many dangers. It shall be
The dawn of peace restored.

ALEXANDER, *to Annas.*

Thy speech was great
And strong in noble wrath. How Pilate quailed
Beneath thy eloquence ! I said of late
To friends, Mark Annas now ; he never failed.

ANNAS.

Thou art most kind. My humble efforts still
Fall short, nor reach the level of my will.

JOSEPH.

Nay ; thou hast done so well that men unborn
Shall hail that man with praise and thee with scorn ;
For, 'though the crowd may follow thee to-day,
They worship martyred men, and own their sway.

ALEXANDER, *to Annas.*

Nay ; heed him not ; his mind is warped, and cleaves
To every thought his fantasy conceives.

BARABBAS, *to Annas.*

I thank you, sir, although you were my foe,
For helping me this day. I do not know
The way to tell my thanks. I once could speak
And move the hearts of men ; but sudden change
Of fortune seems to hold me dazed and weak,
As one who sees a vision passing strange.

ANNAS.

Yes ; thou, no doubt, art grateful, and would'st shew
Thy gratitude. Then try, henceforth, to live
A better life, more honest, peaceful ; so
Thy friends shall feel no shame, and thou shalt give
Us cause for joy in having rescued thee.

BOAZ.

Now, come ; move on, Barabbas ! I can't see.

ANNAS, SON OF ANNAS, *to Alexander.*

Go, find that poet somewhere in the crowd.
The noise and din are growing far too loud,
And soon we'll have a riot. There he stands.

ALEXANDER.

Come, madman, to the chair ! Mankind demands
Thy sober judgment and thy wise decree.
Nay ; seat thyself, nor seek to strive with me.

JOHN.

Well, hear the dream I dreamt this morn,
Which, like a vision, seemed to warn
My soul of ills that swell and surge
Around the world. What's that? A scourge!

BOAZ.

And thou shalt feel it soon.

ALEXANDER.

Come, quick. Dost hear?
The dream. The dream. Are we to wait a year?

JOHN.

I see the soul of darkest night
Enwapt in robes of black and blight;
And, o'er the throne of all the world,
His banner floats in pride, unfurled.

A few stray locks of withered gray
About his wrinkled forehead play;
But from his eyes a ruddy blaze
Emits its fierce and scorching rays.

His thin and nervous fingers hold
A pen and parchment, worn and old;
His arm, of knotted sinews, shakes
As if his fearful spirit quakes;
While wags his beard as keeping time
To this, his wild and frantic rhyme:

"To me the lives of men are given
That they, o'erawed and terror-driven,
May seek beneath my Temple-dome
The stricken spirit's prison-home.

"For mine the sword to slay the soul
Which will not bow to my control:
In wrath, I drive it from the earth
To find in hell its second birth.

"And when deceived deceivers rose
Against my power, and would oppose
My word which is the word of God,
They perished at my angry nod."

But, while the spirit speaks, a ray
Of golden light announces day ;
And all the eastern glories rise
And fling their radiance o'er the skies.

Behold, the glow and warmth invest
A woman, bearing at her breast
A babe which lies in sleep nor hears
The sound of mirth or falling tears.

The vision seems to grow and fill
The morning sky, now calm and still,
For worlds in silence stand and wait
In trembling hope the voice of fate.

And, while the Darkness strives to veil
The vision, while its clouds assail
The hosts of light, a whispered word
By all the world is plainly heard :

“ The soul of future ages sleeps
While daylight o'er its features creeps ;
And see, the Present now, at last,
Prevails to oust the cruel Past,
That so love's victories may shed
A glory round its infant's head.”

BOAZ.

Enough ! Enough ! Be silent, fool ; for look,
The governor returns.

ALEXANDER.

A jest ! They took
That liar's clothes and robed him like a king.
Right regally the scarlet glories cling
About his shoulders. See the Roman wreath !
For sceptre, in his hands he bears a reed.

BOAZ.

That crown is made of thorns ; for underneath
Its leaves the dreamer's head and temples bleed.

PILATE.

Behold the man !

THE PRIESTS.

Away ; to die ! To die !
 Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

THE CROWD.

Away with him ! Away ! To die ! To die !
 Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

PILATE.

Behold your king !

THE CROWD.

Away with him ! To die !
 Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

PILATE.

What ! Crucify your king ?

THE CROWD.

Aye, crucify !

THE PRIESTS.

No king ! He is no king of ours. We own
 No king but Cæsar.

PILATE.

If the man must die
 The crime of slaying him be yours alone,
 For I am guiltless of his death ; and, see,
 I cleanse my hands and wash away the trace
 Of blood. Then see to it.

THE PRIESTS.

His blood shall be
 Upon our heads and on the Jewish race.

THE CROWD.

Away with him ! Away ! To die ! To die !
 Away ; and crucify him ! Crucify !

SCENE 9.—Calvary, facing the South.

(THE mound of Calvary is bleak and bare ;
And scattered stones and heaps of rubble lend
The scene those ruined aspects which offend
The sight already tortured by the glare.

And towards the south the city lies foursquare ;
The walls and roofs and strong-built towers ascend
The rising hills, and in their greyness blend
With clouds which hover in the azure air.

The sun, which shines on Olivet, is now
Like one who passes from the early days
Of youth and life's first quarter, on whose brow
Is seen no more the rare and radiant rays
Of innocence ; but newer powers endow
With strength of soul no mortal may amaze.)

BARUK, *alone.*

How strange that nature often seems
A mirror for our feeling ;
And all the world a book of dreams
Our inmost thoughts revealing.

And so this scene which I have known
To waken wild ambition,
Where memory endows each stone
With treasures of tradition,

Where Zion's proud and royal state,
The Temple's golden glory,
Aroused the soul to emulate
The brave of Jewish story ;

At other times has seemed to tell
 A tale of tearful sighing,
 Of mournful crimes and woes which fell
 Upon the nation dying.

And now the scene appears to wear
 The robes of sullen frowning,
 As if it spoke of grim despair
 And hopes in darkness drowning.

HANNAH, *entering*.

I have come myself, conveying
 News which trembles on my lips :
 Haste away, without delaying ;
 God but stays our lives' eclipse.

Scarcely had I made a mention
 Of thy name and hinted how
 We had formed a firm intention,
 When his anger veiled his brow.

And my father said he's hiring
 Men to mark and murder thee ;
 This he plans with hate untiring ;
 All thy crime thy love for me.

BARUK.

Let me go, and, in some distant land,
 Toil in weariness for daily bread ;
 While my soul, like Rizpah, takes her stand
 By her hopes, once cherished, but now dead,
 To drive away the evil thoughts which prey
 On noble dreams and cause their swift decay.

Yes ; I'll sail to Rome, and haply find,
 Spite of the scorn in which she holds the Jew,
 Room to live in liberty of mind,
 Quickening the thoughts which law and custom slew ;
 Yet there, as here, informers bear their tale
 To those who rule ; and lies alone prevail.

HANNAH.

Then go, and may thy life-star shine
 With glories never meant for me ;
 If there be joys that may be mine,
 Let God transfer them all to thee.

And when, perchance, another maid
 Usurps my place within thy heart,
 Shall then the once-loved image fade,
 And must thy love for me depart ?

Or, when thy life is re-illumed
 With hope, and fortune sets thee high,
 Wilt pity me whom God has doomed
 For love of thee to pine and die ?

BARUK.

Not all the wealth the world possesses,
 Nor all that fancy dreams of fame,
 Could dull the thought of thy caresses,
 Or dim the memory of thy name.

But would'st thou dare to trust me wholly,
 Forsake thy home, its joy and pride,
 And face the world, dependent solely
 On my protection yet untried ?

HANNAH.

Yes ; I'll confide in thee,
 Needing no guerdon
 But to abide with thee,
 Sharing thy burden.

BARUK.

Sweetheart, life has no pang
 Piercing as love's distress
 When fate's venomous fang
 Poisons its happiness.

Idly hope would declare
 Birth of the day from gloom,
 While faith's frenzied despair
 Garnishes passion's tomb.

Action, mind of resource,
 Skill be our pilots now ;
 Through the storm be our course ;
 Darkness on poop and prow.

HANNAH.

Kiss me, dearest, with lips that cling
 Clasp the lips they love,
 While our throats are a-throb and sing
 Songs of the rose and dove.

Kiss me, kiss me as once you kissed,
 Madly with heart on fire,
 When the fury of passion hissed,
 Fervent with fierce desire.

Kiss me, holding me fast in arms
 Nerveless with wild delight,
 Now while heaven attains new charms
 Seen as your satellite.

Kiss me, sovran of worlds of bliss,
 Now as your features fade,
 Veiled in vapours which love like this
 Makes of a world unmade.

BARUK.

We need not seek far-distant lands,
 Or cross to Rome :
 In Egypt yet a temple stands
 Amid a Jewish nation,
 Where thought and speculation
 Have found a home.

And there our dreams will come again
 Thy dreams of love
 As sweet as music's softest strain,
 My dreams of truth supernal ;
 Till dreams become eternal
 In God above.

HANNAH.

'Tis so the Spirit of the world, who drapes
 Himself in human lives,
 Unites the dreams of truth and love, and shapes
 The beauty which survives.

BARUK.

I had heard that God dwelt in each man,
 But believed that the tale was a lie,
 Till my soul gathered courage to scan
 His flashing in flame from your eye.

And I feel that he fashioned your form
 For his fairest and holiest shrine,
 Though he blast with the breath of the storm
 And the lightning his altar in mine.

JUDAS, *entering and meditating.*

A God, who lived, had stayed my hand,
 Nor suffered him to be betrayed
 Because I could not understand
 The vision which his speech displayed,
 And raged to find the schemes I planned,
 Through what I counted dreams delayed.

(*He sees a flower at his feet.*)

Ah, little floweret, whose love is arraying
 Thy bosom with beauty no man may attain ?
 Sweetly thou smilest while humbly displaying
 The ornaments wrought by the sun and the rain.

Art thou an angel, thus lowly disguising
 Thy glory and veiling thy beautiful face,
 Come from the throne of the Highest, surprising
 The world with a vision of pureness and grace ?

See, little floweret, I'll pluck thee as token
 Of light that again shall revisit my sky.
 What have I done to thee ? Lo, thou art broken,
 And now thou must languish and wither and die.

BARUK, *to Judas.*

Stranger, see you yonder throng ?
 Is that Jesus dragged along ?

JUDAS.

Jesus ! 'Tis he. 'Tis he ; and where can I flee ?
 Vengeance of God ! He follows me ; follows me !

(*He goes out.*)

HANNAH.

Slowly, slowly, comes the sad procession,
 Moving on its mournful road :
 Sadly, sadly, bowed in deep depression,
 Jesus totters 'neath his load.

Bound as he, and like him bearing
 Boards to frame a bed of death,
 Two men come, whose hearts despairing
 Tremble in their quick-drawn breath.

Roman soldiers, more unfeeling
 Than the soul in savage breast,
 Deaf as stone to all appealing,
 Drive them on with scourge and jest.

Women follow from the city,
 Drawn by sympathy with woe,
 Woe which rends the heart with pity,
 Pity such as women know.

BARUK.

But see, they strike him, fallen in a trance.
 The soldiers seize a passer-by, and bind
 The beams on him. Once more the crowds advance ;
 And some with rage, and some with tears are blind.

HANNAH.

Why do such men, though scorned and hissed,
 Uplift the brow, as if the light
 Of nobler worlds had crowned and kissed
 Them passing into death and night ?

BARUK.

For so the lightning wreathes in fire
 The topmost branch and highest spire :
 The fiercest forces flame in eyes
 Which most prevail to cleave the skies,
 Whose meteor-flashes gather strength,
 Illume their brow, consume their breast,
 Until their passion proves at length
 To be a splendour and a pest.

HANNAH.

One hope, at times a feeble hope, has burned
 Within my heart, and I have ever nursed
 Its flame with dreams like those the seers rehearsed,
 And for the day of higher manhood yearned.

But when a nobler spirit is discerned
 By other men, the meanest and the worst,
 His name is banned, his faith and fame aspersed,
 And he himself with wrong and insult spurned.

BARUK.

For thus the good and great must ever tread
 The hero's path of stern self-sacrifice,
 And with the legions of the famous dead
 They save the world from bonds of selfish vice ;
 O'er death in life their life in death will shed
 In death and life the love beyond all price.

JOHN, *to the Women.*

Weep not for him, nor pity his sorrow ;
 Wail for the children ye cherish and love,
 For ye will see a vengeance to-morrow,
 Such as the Highest ne'er hurled from above.

If this is done, Jerusalem's daughters,
 Unto the righteous, compared to the trees
 Planted in strength by streams of the waters,
 What shall be done to the wicked at ease ?

HANNAH.

O my God, I would shield him and shelter
 His form with my form ; but I stay
 Lest they beat me till wounded I welter
 Where blood of him blackens the clay.

BARUK.

He loses himself ; but hereafter
 The world shall be won by the deed,
 When death is forgotten in laughter
 And piety sanctifies greed.

But we have abandoned the worthless
 And wearisome world that we may
 Obtain for us, wealthless and mirthless,
 Possession of self for a day.

HANNAH.

But this man lived to loosen earth
 From tyranny of hell,
 To cause by word and deed the birth
 Of freedom's mighty spell.

And all who ever sought the same
 Have met a fearful fate,
 For, driven from the earth in shame,
 They died 'mid yells of hate.

It seems that men are mad indeed,
 Nor recognise the soul
 Which lives, and lives alone, to lead
 Their manhood to its goal.

BARUK.

Blind are the people ; the sin is not theirs ;
 They are untaught, and unable to know
 Truth in its passion or love when it wears
 Vesture of poverty, weakness and woe.

Taught to admire the estate of the proud,
 Used from their childhood to follow the rich,
 How can we blame them, an ignorant crowd,
 Born in a hovel to die in a ditch ?

Right is their heart, and hereafter it wakes,
 Wrathful with those who have led it astray,
 Wakes to the sense of oppression, and breaks
 Bonds which the crafty have forged for their prey.

HANNAH.

See, he but tastes and refuses the cup which our ladies provide,
 Soothing the pain of the hapless ; and see, as he puts it aside,
 Fearless his face, and he stands in his patience, unmoved and alone
 Gentle and calm, like a king on the day he ascends to his throne.

BARUK.

All the world is his who scorns
 What it holds of good or ill,
 Scorns its laurels and its thorns,
 Strong in virtue, firm in will.

HANNAH.

Now the soldiers have unbound him,
 Standing king-like, though uncrowned ;
 Now they gather close around him ;
 Now they fling him to the ground.
 God of pity, does thy power avail ?
 See, one takes the hammer and the nail.

CHILDREN OF NAZARETH, *entering and singing.*

Under our feet
 The flowerets are springing :
 Voices as sweet
 As heaven are singing.
 Coming is death ;
 The flowerets are dying ;
 Songs, by his breath,
 Will change into sighing.

BARUK.

O God, where is thy power
 In this woe-stricken hour
 To stay these sinners from a deed mankind shall rue ?
 Oh, let thy curses fall ;
 In wrath consume them all.

JESUS.

Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.

SCENE 10.—A Meditation.

Calvary, looking towards the North.

(FLOODED with noontide flame, the scene grows vivid ;
And on the skull-shaped mound the scorching glare
Beats fierce, and bathes pale forms and features livid,
Whose death-sweat steeps their brows and tangled hair.

Nailed to their crosses, three men are suspended
In spasms and unimaginable pangs,
Fathoming scorn no scorner comprehended ;
And in the midst the Galilean hangs.

His eyes are swollen, nor perceive the glances
Of curious men and women mad with woe ;
Nor see before them how the sunlight dances
Until the city gleams with golden glow ;
And far behind him runs the northern road
To Nazareth, his happiest abode.)

THE WOMEN.

O Jesus, why must thou, so pure and gentle,
Perish in pangs and leave us in despair ?
Is sin our sovran, and more elemental
His force than hopes which happy love-dreams bear ?

Is God bereft of love to thee, his lover ?
And will he watch while wickedness devours
The heart whose pain is potent to discover
The latent power for wretchedness in ours ?

God's eyes are closed ; his lips forget the kisses
 By which his spirit mingled with thine own ;
 His ears are deaf, nor heed the coward hisses
 Which mock the man who dared to stand alone.
 O God, forgive our blasphemy, and save
 Our best and bravest hero from the grave.

JOHN.

Disdaining death, my soul would prove an eagle
 Fearlessly hovering o'er the dark abyss ;
 But thoughts arise, availing to inveigle
 My mind to moods of gloomy cowardice.
 The consciousness of sin's unmeasured burden
 Trebles the grief which grows from actual wrong ;
 And even now the everlasting guerdon
 Of sinfulness extinguishes my song.

What can I give to gain relief from Helldom
 Throned in my heart and darkening my days ?
 Racked with corroding bonds, my life has seldom
 Leisure from self to offer prayer and praise.
 O God, have mercy ; save me from despair
 For sake of him who hangs in torture there.

BARUK.

Dark is the day, although the sun's at noon
 And smites the form of him who quivers, panting,
 Filling the air with sorrows which attune
 The world to songs of dim, mysterious chanting.

And mists of tearful pity veil the skies
 Where dwells the Lord, beholding but unheeding
 The myriad pangs in which his martyr dies
 And all the pathos of his silent pleading.

O God, thou hast dethroned thyself by this,
 And cruelly hast crowned this Man of Sorrow,
 Whose spirit penetrates deep Hell's abyss
 To enter Heaven as thy God to-morrow ;
 For Thought and Action fly from thee to vow
 Allegiance to the peasant dying now.

JOSEPH.

So perishes the poor man known as herald
 Of juster ages speeding towards the earth ;
 And even thus, in vain, the seers imperiled
 Themselves, their cause, and all they held of worth.

The polished worldling and the worldly pious
 Found here a foe who foiled their policy,
 And, fortified by fear and party-bias,
 Suppress the voice of patient poverty.

And God, who clothes the morning in vermilion
 And vests the day-spring in green-azure pearled,
 At noontide looks from his superb pavilion
 On misery the mantle of this world.
 Ah, God, what portion have the poor in thee ?
 For rich men's rods interpret thy decree.

BARUK.

Unhappy world, whose laughter pales this morning,
 For pity deifies self-sacrifice,
 And pleasure fades before ascetic scorning
 Of Nature's virtue as a human vice.

The rich, red blood, which blackens in its streaming,
 Shall prove a symbol of our native fire
 Grown dim to match the darkness of the dreaming
 In whose drear loneliness our loves expire.

Unhappy world, for whom the blood of martyrs
 Creates new blindness and a sterner reign
 Than that which passes when its victim barter
 His life for fierce, unutterable pain ;
 Since countless hearts must bleed to recompense
 The patient woe of murdered innocence.

JOHN.

O Voice of God, at length I learn the meaning
 Of those deep words in which thy thoughts took form ;
 And azure smiles through clouds of gloom careening
 O'er skies of terror in the spirit's storm.

Broken for me is passion's fiery phial
 From which I drank those fancies fugitive :
 Give me instead the sternest self-denial,
 And let me drink of death that I may live.

Dead to the world in spiritual rapture,
 Deaf to its doctrines, curses and applause,
 My spirit spurns its robe of flesh to capture
 A glimpse of God in his eternal laws ;
 And in that mystic world no sins molest
 The peace which thou createst in the breast.

JOSEPH.

King of the Jews ; for by that scornful title
 These men would move the multitude to mirth,
 Unconscious that thy meekness claims requital
 Hereafter from the kingdoms of the earth.

Dimly aware, the world grows still with wonder,
 Scanning the words inscribed above thy head ;
 And lo, the robes of kings are rent asunder,
 Whose naked forms, like thine, are almost dead.

Now, in thy murder, kingship signs a sentence
 Of infamy against the royal name ;
 Nor can the law be changed by late repentance,
 For Nature's forces countersign the same.
 Thus Tyranny expires in suicide,
 And Meekness takes the throne usurped by Pride.

JOHN.

Meekest of men, remain to me as master,
 And live my lord, though slain in great disgrace ;
 For all the grief of infinite disaster
 Is weak to quench the godhead in thy face.

Within thy form, now palsied in death's rigour,
 Dwells an eternal virtue more divine
 Than mortal man's, and potent to transfigure
 The frame it fashioned for its earthly shrine.

Beauty shall bring her brightest blooms to blazon
 The transient vision of a God revealed ;
 And Love shall chant through every diapason
 The fadeless love thy love of love shall yield ;
 For Death is slain at last in slaying thee,
 And dies to seal thy deathless deity.

THE WOMEN.

Nothing more lovely has been ever given
 To woman's heart than thou in thy distress ;
 And fired with seraph-love our souls are driven
 To mingle with thy soul in long caress.

And they whose lives are lone, unkissed, unwedded,
 Become thy brides in rapturous ecstasy,
 Revelling in worship till their judgments credit
 Their passion's echo as a word from thee.

Led by thy love and spiritual beauty,
 Women accomplish thrice the work of men ;
 Raising a cross to crown the road of duty,
 They brave all deaths in palace, camp, and den ;
 Until the world shall pause from strife to learn
 The mystic love with which our bosoms burn.

JOSEPH.

Weak are the slaves, and sluggish though affronted ;
 Many in number, but without a head.
 What if their feelings, rude indeed and blunted,
 Instinctively should turn them to the dead ?

Then when thy failure is a scorn no longer,
 Marvel and mystery shall mould thy life
 Until its force, transfigured, prove much stronger
 Than marshalled multitudes in freedom's strife.

We hope, perhaps, beyond what wisdom warrants,
 Dreaming of lands on some more sheltered shore ;
 Yet we can act ; and deeds will swell the torrents
 Shattering custom in the breakers' roar ;
 And when the barriers burst, the tides proclaim
 Invincible the virtue of thy name.

BARUK.

Brave life, so loyal to the light of Heaven—
 If Heaven gave that light so pure and clear—
 For good or evil, now thy words are leaven
 In human thought, and live till Time is sere.

But words like those thy gentle lips have uttered
 Are slain that their dead forms may serve as spell
 To still the fears in which poor madmen muttered
 The incantations and the charms of Hell.

And in thy words of fiery indignation
 Another age may find an evidence
 Supporting some despairing speculation
 To torture men with agonised suspense ;
 Till God, supremely glorious in thy faith,
 Shall seem to them a terrifying wraith.

JOHN.

Thy sweat and blood compose thy whole apparel ;
 But thou shalt wear God's glory on the morn
 When thou returnest with triumphant carol
 To rule the men who murdered thee in scorn.
 Millions shall mourn and cry to thee for mercy,
 Turning from idols which their lusts devised :
 Silence succeeds ; for 'mid thy controversy
 The thunder's mute and lightning's paralysed.
 But from the halo gleaming o'er thy forehead,
 And reminiscent of this thorny crown,
 Terror, more dread than sin and hell are horrid,
 Shatters the world, and strikes its glories down.
 Viewing the vengeance, all the universe
 Shall laugh, relieved of this unmeasured curse.

BARUK.

Dear heart, what hast thou brought of love or loathing
 To gloom or gladden this frail life of ours ;
 A fleeting hope ; or clinging hatred, clothing
 With irreligion man's convulsive hours ?
 Though thou art mute and meek with seraph glory,
 Thy name outlives Jerusalem and Rome,
 And rioting in vengeance, fierce and gory,
 Stains all the world a cruel monochrome.
 For those who mocked thee in thy noon of sorrow
 Treble that mocking in thy noon of fame
 When they're athirst for strife or power, and borrow
 Thy humble garb to sanctify their shame,
 Surpassing Falsehood in the epigraph
 Which they inscribe upon thy cenotaph.

JOSEPH.

The nets of shame which ancient Wrong has woven
 Dissolve before the murmur of thy name,
 As all the clouds of Tyranny are cloven
 By Meekness, mighty in thy swordless fame.

A low-breathed whisper lulls the brutal quarrels
 Which cursed mankind with hate and hideous rage,
 When Love, annihilating savage morals,
 Fulfils thy dreams, and brings the Golden Age.

Then Order wakens from the world's confusion ;
 And Labour's laws set free the citizen,
 Needing no aid from stupor and illusion
 To make its rule endurable by men ;
 For mortals, moved by faith, shall overwhelm
 All helot states in one immortal realm.

THE WOMEN.

Thy soul and ours in mystical communion
 Shall multiply thy features, till the race
 Bears the twin offspring of our wedded-union,
 Man's perfect grief and God's imperfect grace.

Then all whom love endows with love's acumen
 Shall recognise on every human brow
 The symbol of a virtue more than human,
 But like to that which thou revealest now.

And we shall toil, though not unscorned or scathless,
 For thee thus mirrored in each human form
 However frail it be, self-willed, or faithless,
 Or lightning-struck in earthly passions' storm,
 That so the work of women may complete
 The shrine of goodness built on thy defeat.

SCENE II.—A Dream.
The World of the Dead.

(IN the land where no clouds ever hide
The face of the far-off skies,
Where the tear-woven veil is untied,
Which fell upon mortal eyes ;

In the wonderful world of the dead,
The masters of men are seen
With noble and lofty mien,
As if mirth and depression were fled.

Their foeman, the lord of death,
Deprived them of earthly breath,
But repaid them with all he could give,
For he gave them in dying to live.

And they live in that beautiful air,
Never troubled by sorrow or care,
But dream, as they live in love,
Of worthier worlds above.

For love is a living scroll
In the letters and language of light,
And the more to the purified sight
Its manifold texts unroll.

At times, in their dreams, the rays
Of an earthlier light will appear,
The light of the olden days,
Which is still to their memories dear.)

A GREEK BARD.

Ages and ages ago,

When I sang but to pleasure the dying,
Clear were the voices, but low

And distressful, which answered, replying :

“ Why is applause for the brave

Who are dead, with the people who followed ?
Opened the jaws of the grave :

Both the heroes and people were swallowed.
Sing not of battles, the joys

And the pains of the men who have perished,
Themes which a woman employs

In bewailing the son she has cherished.

“ Sing of the living, dismayed,

And the grief of the heart that is broken ;
Sing of the darkness displayed

By the chieftains of death as their token ;
Sing of the struggle for life,

And, attuning your accents to sorrow,
Wail o'er the wasting of strife

And the gloom that is veiling the morrow.”

Stern and deeper the tones

Of my heart as it wakened in anger :

“ Turn from the weeping and groans,

And resigning to women the languor,
Ever engage in the strife,

As with strength of Immortals endowered ;
Never the rage that is rife

Can appal but the soul of a coward.”

A KING OF BABYLON.

Across the clash of arms I heard

An echo of a nobler word,

Which never could have found its birth
Amid the mournful scenes of earth.

It flew from yonder flaming skies

To which it bade my soul arise

And, where the northern darkness shrouds
The peak of Elburz with the clouds,

To plant my feet, nor hesitate
 To match Immortals with my state,
 Beyond the starry circles climb,
 And reign a god to endless time.

A HEBREW PROPHET.

The songs I sang were psalms of tears and shame :
 For unto me the voice of sorrow came.

Thy tones set forth thy claim to reign with God :
 I wept the captive race by thee down-trod.

Unknown to men, I sang the Servant's Song :
 My nameless voice bewept my people's wrong.

They saw the star-light shine on Babel's stream :
 But never hope's bright star on exiles' dream.

Can human mind such mournful mood conceive ?
 Can human heart, unbroken, live to grieve ?

The nation, silent as a sheep, was slain :
 And, lamb-like, died, nor murmured in its pain.

A voice announced for thee a lofty fate :
 It echoed that which told their piteous state.

AN EASTERN MYSTIC.

Desires, conflicting, fill with woe
 The world of sense below :
 Each gives his truest life to gain
 Some fancied good through others' pain ;
 And life, regarding life as foe,
 No rest can ever know.

But who can cause the strife to cease
 And lead us to the perfect peace ?

Thus spoke the voice which, in my soul,
 Was wont to warn me, and control :

“ As the lily, when planted 'mid sights that offend,
 Shedding sweetness of beauty and fragrance around,
 Is the righteous who dwells with the men who contend,
 For his life is with peace-giving peacefulness crowned.

“ As the plant, when it flings off the flowers that have died,
Is the righteous who casts all his self-love away,
And, divesting himself of his passion and pride,
Lives to herald for mortals a happier day.”

But doubting still I asked again,
Will then the righteous find release
From all the bonds of earthly pain,
And reach the life where sorrows cease ?

In dreamy tones the voice resumed
The mournful tale of mortals doomed :

“ When the body is lapped in the fire at the last,
Then the soul, which was longing for rest from the strain
And the stress of its life, from its prison has passed
To be born unto sorrow again and again.”

How wild the grief that filled my breast,
And palsied every pulse and thought ;
For I would never reach that rest
My soul had sorrowed for, and sought.

The captive bird which spends its rage
In foiled attempts to 'scape and fly,
And with its wings would burst its cage,
Has liberty at least to die.

But, bound upon the rack of earth,
The soul must view through endless years
Its birth and death and still re-birth
To sad inheritance of tears.

And, trembling with despair, I said,
Are life and grief for ever wed ?

Then, gently, like a whispered sigh,
The voice of Buddha made reply :

“ When boisterous winds no more with blasts disturb
The fertile fields, the corn may stand in peace ;
And when the passions, checked, are held with curb,
The restless fevers of desire decrease ;
For, while they rage, the heart can never cease
To mourn its dreams and fancies, unattained :
Then slay desire, and so procure release
From life ; and, lost to life, eternal rest is gained.”

It seemed as when, amid a crowd,
 A strain of distant music steals,
 Which, heard above the turmoil loud,
 A world of harmony reveals.
 I sought the death in life which heals
 Desire, and hastened to distil
 The drug which lotus-death conceals
 From all who boast a rebel will.

A WOMAN OF SHUNEM.

I would not ask one sorrow less,
 Of those which vexed my earthly years ;
 I felt in them my God's caress,
 And heard his blessing in my fears.

When once a pleasure-loving king
 Commanded me to be his bride,
 His ladies oft would softly sing
 In tones to wake my love and pride.

But they had torn me from my toil ;
 For mine it was to tend the field,
 To guard from harm the vineyard's spoil,
 And watch the fruits the gardens yield.

They tore me from my lover's breast ;
 In vain they would my grief appease ;
 And thus the singers I addressed,
 " Awake not love until it please."

For how could love endure to dwell
 Within such passing splendid halls,
 Where only languid features tell
 Of those whom palling pleasure thralls ?

And, while the royal ladies sang
 As sweetly as my native rills,
 My lover's voice still clearer rang
 On Lebanon's encedared hills.

" Come away, my little sweetheart, fly with me ;
 " For the winter is past,
 " And the summer at last
 " In its beauty comes to greet the land and sea.

“ Now the flowers are bearing robes to deck the earth ;
 “ Birds are singing above ;
 “ Doves are cooing of love ;
 “ And the fruit-trees share the universal mirth.”

But still I knew the dawn would break,
 And every shadow flee away,
 When sleeping love at last would wake
 To live in love's eternal day.

HER LOVER.

Yes ; my sweetheart, woman's truth and faith were thine ;
 Truth, exceeding belief ;
 Faith, that vanquishes grief
 When its pure white light and youth's rose glow combine.

THE WOMAN OF SHUNEM.

And, when at length the king withdrew,
 I found within my lover's arms
 A home where never ills pursue
 With vain regrets or wild alarms.

But all the light of later years,
 Which grew upon the growing sight,
 Became a rainbow's varied light
 That sparkles in those early tears.

In grief, the joys of other days
 Are seen through gloom and tearful haze :
 In joy, remembered grief will wear
 The semblance of an angel fair.

THE CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Who comes to trouble this region so blest
 By a countenance heavy with woe,
 Like one whose spirit might never have rest
 From the care and the struggle below ?

JUDAS, *entering*.

Nay ; touch me not, for crimes still stain
 My soul with guilty fears ;
 And wild remorse consumes my brain,
 Nor finds relief in tears :
 The memories of sin remain
 To grieve through changeless years.

THE CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Dark must the sin be,
Raging within thee,
O'er death prevailing,
Vengeance entailing.

Light now is growing
Brighter and glowing,
Radiant with splendour,
Gracious and tender.

Who is ascending,
Hitherward tending ?
Vision possessing
Infinite blessing.

JESUS, *entering*.

I come from a planet below,
Whose sun in the distance afar
Is seen as an indistinct star ;
Where winds of remembrances blow
In sadness, and memories wave
Like cypresses over the grave
Of dreams that were brighter than day,
Of hopes that have vanished away ;
And there did I toil, for I willed
In storm-beaten bosoms to build
A kingdom, with peacefulness filled.

THE CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Noble spirit, speak and say,
Upon what throne did mortals place thee ?
With what symbol of thy sway
Did happy men delight to grace thee ?

JESUS.

Behold my hands, my feet, my side.

THE CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Ingrates ! Thou hast been crucified.
About thy head we bind the poet's crown,
For thine his thoughts, his grief, his great renown ;
The diadems of kings to thee belong,
For thou hast led the world to war with wrong ;

The priestly crown and mitre is thine own,
 For thou hast found the sorrows which atone,
 The progress gained by sacrifice alone.
 Then reign a poet-priest upon thy throne ;
 And, with the triple crown upon thy head,
 Be thou for ever monarch of the dead.
 At length in rest and peace begin thy reign,
 And here the purpose of thy life attain.

JUDAS.

Do not, Master, thus meet me, directing thy gaze
 On the worm at thy feet with the glance of the days
 That are fled ; but with curses invoke every woe
 On my head, and I'll turn from thy presence and go.

JESUS.

Friend, thy life was not in vain.
 When, illumined by thy grief,
 Thou shalt rise and strive again,
 God will haste to thy relief.

Spirits, dream not yet of rest ;
 There are worlds unknown, untrod ;
 Speed on hence with zeal and zest,
 Upwards to the throne of God.

THE CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Thou, whom the holy
 Light is adorning,
 Aid us that, scorning
 Base things and lowly,
 We may see clearer
 Goal of our dream,
 Ever draw nearer
 God the supreme.

JESUS.

The earth's own shadow makes the moon-light less,
 And veils from view that poor reflected beam :
 Men shroud the truth with their own nothingness,
 And dim the light in man with their own dream.

Behold the light itself, no borrowed gleam ;
 Then strive to gain it, as, in dark distress
 Ye passionate for it ; strive, till every stream
 Of light has led to God, who waits to bless.

Still onward, upward ; wake the noblest chord
 Of all the heart-strings ; ever yearn, aspire ;
 Nor let some fading world eclipse the lord
 Of day, and shroud the source of truth and fire :
 Still seek the noblest work and such reward
 As suits the hero-soul whom naught could tire.

THE CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Nobly thou speakest,
 Nerving the weakest
 Still to endeavour.
 Skies, rent asunder,
 Echo in thunder,
 “ Upward for ever.”

SCENE 12. —An After-thought.

Earth and Heaven.

O BRIDE of my dream-life, the songs of my chanting
Are pale and appear unimpassioned and cold,
Compared with thy bosom's most rhythmical panting
Beneath its apparel of purple and gold.

Through numberless years I have nursed the wild wonder
Which longed to decipher the flame-written scroll
Encircling thy brow and to learn in the thunder
The word that unveiled thee and uttered thy soul.

My will was bewitched by the worth of mine idol,
But now I am nearing the foot of thy throne
To fling round thy spirit the spell of our bridal
And fashion my faith as a star for thy zone.

HEAVEN.

I read upon each crag and cliff,
Though vested in a robe of mist,
Thy secret veiled in hieroglyph ;
But, on the peaks my lips have kissed,
The morning, like a melodist,
Tells of thy love and lonely tears
To all the suns in all the spheres
Until the whole creation hears.

Above thy rough and wrinkled face,
Age has entwined a wreath of snows,
But in thy pulses finds no place
For placid peace and calm repose,

Where passions throb in fiery throes
 Born of primeval night's abyss
 To lap thy life in shock and schism
 And clothe thee with a cataclysm.

Though ruin rules thy realm as yet,
 In this thy hope is evidence
 Of days to dawn, when fume and fret,
 Appeased by passion's recompense,
 Shall yield thy heart to love intense
 Which even now awakes and strips
 Away the cloud of thine eclipse
 And proves thy soul's apocalypse.

EARTH.

I have trodden the anguish of poignant betrayal
 And faltered on verge of a loathsome abyss,
 But the impulse which moved me to make the essayal
 Is crowned as divine by a moment like this.

All my dread, lest the beauty I dreamed was illusion
 Transforming the sepulchred horrors of death,
 Is dispelled by the splendours in spendthrift profusion
 Bestowed on the stars by the waves of thy breath.

I would clasp thee and cling to thee, glad in those glances
 Which waken delight in my woodlands and streams,
 For the thrill of affection is felt and entrances
 My heart with a rapture unknown to my dreams.

HEAVEN.

The grandeur of thy granite limbs
 Which tremble with their strong desires
 Prevail beyond thy chain of hymns,
 Moulded on passion-broken lyres ;
 But neither woo me as the fires
 Mantling in lustres vale and hill
 Where Autumn's magic wands distil
 The glories in the chlorophyll.

But dearer are those puny forms,
 Whom vehemence and madness rule
 And make the playthings of the storms ;
 For, scorning reason's ridicule,
 They build of verse a vestibule
 To this great Temple, where I dwell
 Throned on the deep whose tidal swell
 Is mystery and miracle.

Yet not for these I love thee most,
 But for the men impelled to climb
 Life's spiral pathway, unengrossed
 By fear of phantoms formed in slime,
 Who, having battled with their time,
 Shall pass within my Temple-gate
 And hear the ages celebrate
 Their lives with love immaculate.

EARTH.

By remains of the mortals who moved thee to love me,
 By labours of heroes who hallowed my toil,
 Let thy mercy which hovers for ever above me
 Look down on the grime of my soul, and assoil.

Oh, remember the men whom the multitude martyred
 And slew for allegiance to freedom and truth,
 And have thought for the feeble who thoughtlessly bartered
 For pleasure the valorous impulse of youth.

Do thou yield to the wild inarticulate yearning
 In wails of the wind and in sobs of the sea,
 For the rapture of ecstasy fills me discerning
 Supreme existence as mirrored in thee.



THE WELCOME BY SORROW.

Out of her lips leaped a song that was part of her,
Broke into stars on the brow of the night,
Each of them winged with a dream from the heart of her,
Bathed in her beauty and thrilled with delight.

Love-light sprang forth and was fain of repaying her,
Flew to her bosom with flame which excels
Even the beauty of dreamland arraying her
Dimly in music and magical spells.

Silence and darkness beheld and grew amorous,
Kindling and fanning their fire with her breath
Till they were clothed as the noontide and clamorous,
Bursting the bars of imprisoning death.

Ages arose from the grave-land of history,
Hastened to robe her in garments of old,
Wrought of the beautiful pallor of mystery,
Faintly suffused with impalpable gold.

All that the universe veiled was revealed to her,
All of its treasures disclosed to her gaze ;
All that was living and loving appealed to her,
Yielding her worship and waiting her praise.

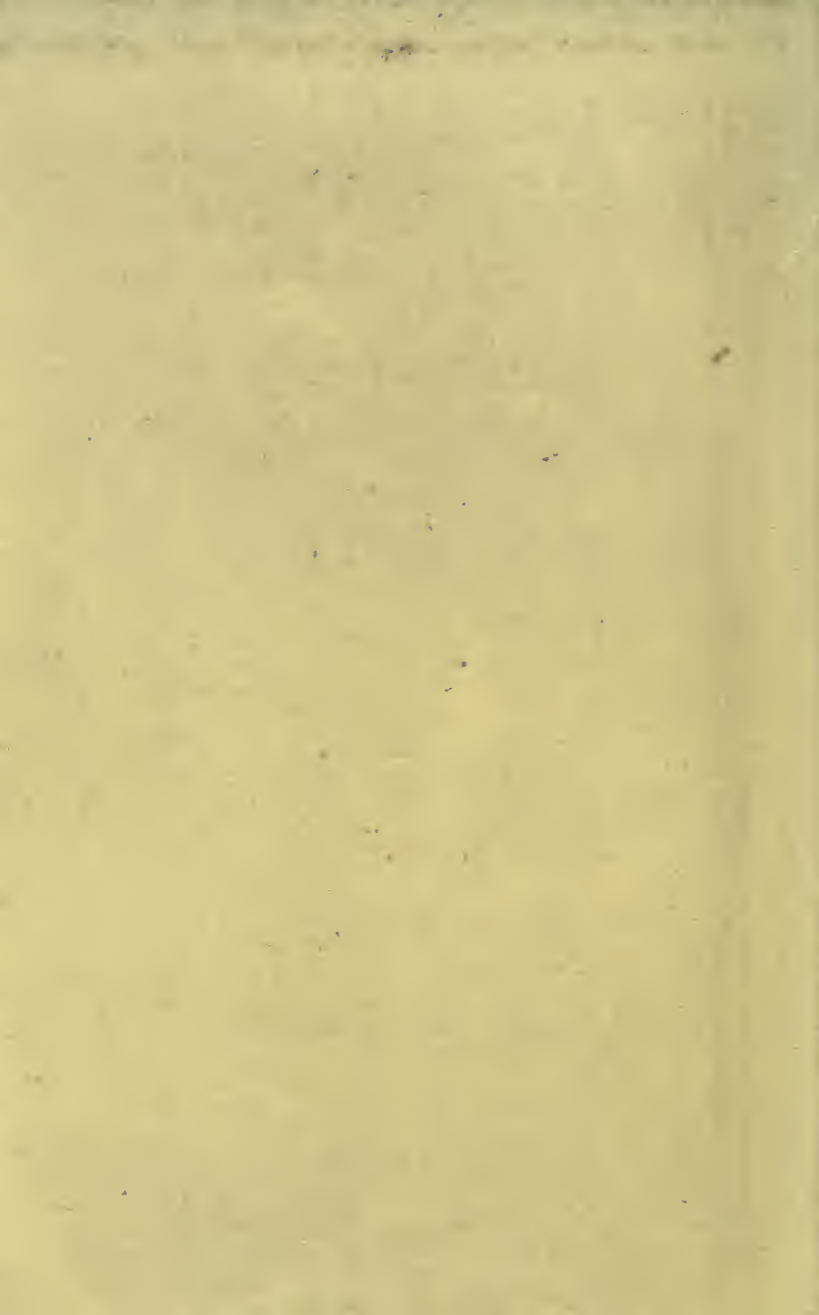
Then when eternity panted its passionate,
Fawned at her feet with the plaint of the sea,
Lo, she was moved by an impulse irrational,
Spurned all the splendours and smiled upon me.

THE FAREWELL TO THE POEM.

Why dost thou weep, poor child, unless to be
A partner in thy parent's misery,
Whose early flames were flung on sterile ways
Where weariness had well-nigh quenched the blaze;
And these my tears are shed because thy frame
Shakes with thy father's and his fathers' shame.

Save for thyself thy treasury of tears,
For soon the world prepares its rack and shears
To mar thy shape, and frets with fool and knave
Thy path from mother-breast to mother-grave,
Until the bane of birth and ills of life
Madden ; but madness multiplies the strife.

But leave me now, for faint and ill at ease,
I hear an elegy in every breeze
Which breathes thy name, but know not if the breath
Whispers of mine or thine approaching death ;
Yet I would live to make another song
To soothe my pain and half-redeem thy wrong.



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